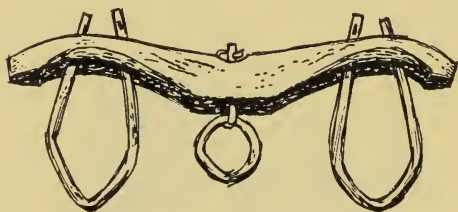


Ben Hardin Helm

R. GERALD McMURTRY

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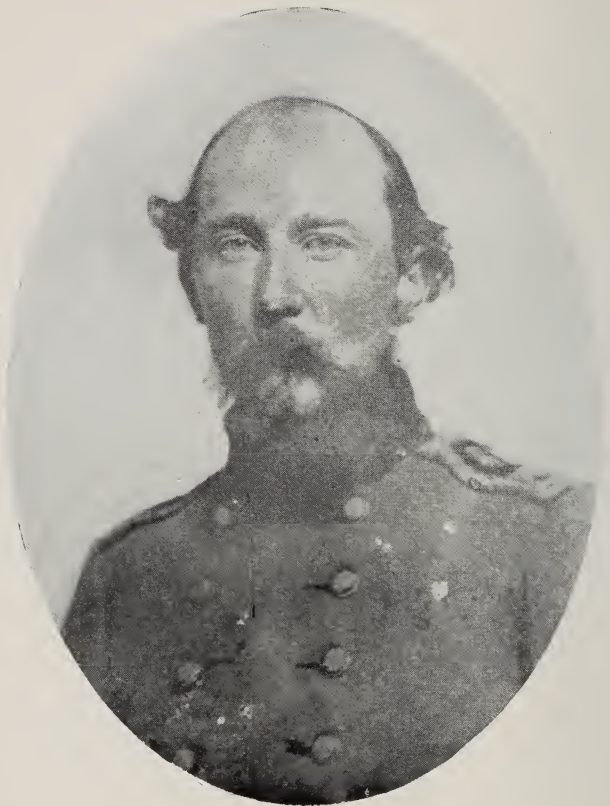
BEN HARDIN HELM

The Author

Robert Gerald McMurtry is the director of the Department of Lincolnia, at Lincoln Memorial University, where he teaches American history and is editor of the Lincoln Herald. He was born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, February 17, 1906, and attended Centre College. He was Librarian and research assistant at the Lincoln National Life Foundation from 1931 to 1935.

Mr. McMurtry was a member of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky in 1935 to establish the Lincoln migration trail in Kentucky. He is a member of various historical societies, including the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Filson Club and The Civil War Round Table. He brings to his writings something of the seeking spirit and deep earnestness that characterizes his personality.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE.



BEN HARDIN HELM

Photograph courtesy of Frederick H. Meserve
New York, N. Y.

Ben Hardin Helm

“Rebel” Brother-in-Law
of Abraham Lincoln — with a
Biographical Sketch of His
Wife and an Account of the
Todd Family of
Kentucky

By *R. Gerald McMurtry*



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Department of Lincolniana

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Of Kentucky's History

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FOREWORD

As a youth in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, I was taught to regard General Ben Hardin Helm as one of the State's most illustrious heroes. After I became older and interpreted history in my own light and according to my own notions, I found that this young Confederate general was worthy of all the eulogies and tributes that I had heard uttered by Kentuckians in praise of his name.

After delving into a biographical study of this military hero, I found that his life was not only colorful from the standpoint of family, civil activities and military exploits, but that his personal relationships with Abraham Lincoln also contributed to his historical importance. A fratricidal struggle causes brother to face brother and father to fight son on the field of battle, yet few people realize that during the first years of the Civil War the Sixteenth President of the United States has a brother-in-law at the head of a Confederate army, who during his brief career paid as costly a sacrifice for the South as Lincoln paid for the North.

In the title and text of this biographical sketch I have referred to Ben Hardin Helm as a rebel general. I have not used the word "rebel" to disparage the man, indeed I have great admiration for him, but due to the fact that the word connotes the historic meaning I wish to convey.

In my research work and in writing this biography, I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis and Mr. Ben Hardin Helm of Lexington, Kentucky, for invaluable information concerning their father. J. Winston Coleman, Jr., and William H. Townsend, also of Lexington, and Monroe F. Cockrell of Chicago, gave me excellent advice as to the best way to relate this story and fortunately helped me correct some minor errors. Lastly, Dr. Stewart W. McClelland and Dr. Robert L. Kincaid, both of Lincoln Memorial University, gave me the encouragement to make an exhaustive study of the subject and the assurance that my quest was worthwhile.

R. Gerald McMurtry

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PART I

Fateful Decisions

I.

NO HIGH official of the Confederate government, either soldier or civilian, had a more intimate contact with President Abraham Lincoln than the rebel brigadier-general, Ben Hardin Helm. This close association resulted from the fact that the two men had married half-sisters and this kinship formed a lasting friendship which continued until the first years of the Civil War and until the death of General Helm.¹

Lincoln and Helm had much in common other than marriage in the Todd family. The young soldier resided in Hardin County, Kentucky, only fourteen miles from the place where Lincoln

¹Robert S. Todd and Eliza Parker (first wife) had seven children, six of whom reached maturity. Elizabeth married Ninian W. Edwards, Frances married William Wallace, Levi married Louisa Searles, divorced, Mary married Abraham Lincoln, Ann married C. M. Smith, and George married Miss _____ Curry. All the children of the first family, with the exception of George, were loyal to the Union. Robert S. Todd and Elizabeth Humphreys (second wife) had nine children, eight of whom reached maturity. Margaret married C. H. Kellogg, Samuel was not married, David married a Mrs. _____ Williamson, Martha married Clement White, Emilie married Ben Hardin Helm, Alexander was not married, Elodie married N. H. R. Dawson, and Katherine married W. W. Herr. All the children of the second family, with the exception of Margaret, were southern sympathizers.

Evans, W. A.: *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln A Study of Her Personality and Her Influence on Lincoln*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1932, pages 43-52.

first saw the light of day, although he was born June 2, 1831, in the home of his grandfather, Ben Hardin, at Bardstown.² Then, too, during the years of peace before the Civil War Ben Hardin Helm had taken up law as his profession, which of course provided him with a congenial basis for a lasting friendship with Abe Lincoln, who was making a name for himself before the Illinois bar and in local politics.³

Lincoln's brother-in-law was the oldest child of twelve children born to John Larue Helm and Lucinda Barbour Hardin.⁴ His father was twice

² Biographical Sketch of Brigadier General Ben Hardin Helm. Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of the Orphan Brigade*. Lewis N. Thompson, Louisville, Ky., 1898, pages 380-387. Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis (daughter of Ben Hardin Helm) to author, April 10, 1942, Files of Department of Lincolniana, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

³ The given name of Helm immediately brings to mind one of Kentucky's greatest lawyers. "For a considerable period not far from the year 1820, there were four contemporaries from four different American States, whose names were household words throughout the western country. To their slightest deliverances an admiring and partial public gave attentive ear. Between the backwoods Crockett, of Tennessee, and the polished Randolph, of Virginia, was a long step, but somewhere in the interval stood the exuberant Corwin, of Ohio, and the "homely-witted Hardin, of Kentucky" Little, Lucius P.: *Ben Hardin: His times and Contemporaries*. Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, 1887., pages VII-VIII.

⁴ *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Edited by James Grant Wilson and John Fiske. D. Appleton and Company, 1888. Vol. III, page 161.

The following children were born to John L. and Lucinda Helm:-

1. Benjamin Hardin Helm. Born June 2, 1831, died September 20, 1863.
2. George Helm, a lawyer. Died at Memphis, Tenn. in 1858.

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governor of Kentucky and served in several other offices of trust and profit.⁵ The son was nurtured by the father in the Whig tradition, the same political party Lincoln championed so long in Illinois. John L. Helm was elected Lieutenant-governor in 1848 on the Whig ticket with John J. Crittenden, and he served out that notable Kentuckian's term when he resigned in 1850 to enter the Fillmore cabinet. Again in 1867, during the reconstruction period, he was elected governor by a majority of 43,019 votes over his combined radical and conservative opponents. Governor Helm took the oath of office on September 3, while lying ill at his

-
3. Lizzie Barbour Helm, the oldest daughter, married the Hon. H. W. Bruce who was a member from Kentucky to the Confederate States Congress and later a circuit judge. Died November, 1897.
 4. Rebecca Jane Helm died in 1859.
 5. Sarah "Sally" Hardin Helm married Major Thomas Hayes, an officer in the Confederate army on July 17, 1861.
 6. Lucinda Barbour Helm. Born December 23, 1839. Died November 15, 1897.
 7. Emily Palmer Helm married Martin Hardin Marriott.
 8. Mary Helm.
 9. John L. Helm.
 10. James Pendleton Helm. Died March 29, 1910.
 11. Thomas Preston Helm.
 12. One child died in infancy.
Clift, G. Glenn: *Governors of Kentucky 1792-1942*. The Hobson Press, Cynthiana, Ky. 1942. Pages 62-63.
None of General Helm's brothers were in the Confederate army.

⁵ *Dictionary of American Biography*. Edited by Dumas Malone, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, Vol. VIII, pages 513-514.

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home in Elizabethtown and he expired five days later before assuming his official duties.⁶

His mother was a daughter of Ben Hardin, a member of the United States Senate from Kentucky, who was dubbed by John Randolph as a "kitchen-knife whetted on a brick." The eccentric Virginian characterized Hardin as being "rough

Lieutenant-governor Helm became governor of Kentucky on July 30, 1850 upon the resignation of Governor John J. Crittenden. In 1867 he was elected governor over Judge William B. Kinkead, Union or Conservative candidate, and Colonel Sidney Barnes, the Republican candidate - the vote:

Helm	90,225
Barnes	33,939
Kinkead	13,167

Clift, G. Glenn: *Governors of Kentucky 1792-1942*. Page 61.

⁶ "Helm's (John L. Helm) maternal grandfather came from the Shenandoah Valley, near Battletown, now called Berryville, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. I have visited the spot, and it was then as lovely a portion of God's earth as eyes ever beheld. Since that day, Alas! it has been swept of its beauties by fire and the desolating tread of a brutalized soldiery. There is a fact connected with the wanton destruction of property in this part of Virginia which I cannot forbear mentioning. The valley of the Shenandoah has been the home of the Larues ever since the settlement of the country, and many members of the family continue to reside there to this day. The late Mr. Lincoln's father lived close by those of them that had emigrated to Kentucky and settled on Nolynn. He was poor, and at the time of Mr. Lincoln's birth, his family was almost subsisted by the charity of the Larue family. When the order was given to render desolate the Shenandoah Valley, it was an ukase against the near relatives of those who had given Mr. Lincoln bread in his impoverished infancy. The Larue family, though none of its members ever attained any marked eminence, was made up of industrious, quiet, unobtrusive people, who were not only excellent citizens, but also pious Christians." Alexander, Joseph M.: *Biographical Sketch of Lazarus W. Powell and John L. Helm*. 1886. Note on page 13 of the John L. Helm biography.



BEN HARDIN HELM

West Point Cadet

Photograph used with the permission of Mr. Ben Hardin Helm and Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis, Lexington, Kentucky.



BEN HARDIN HELM

(Beardless portrait of the Confederate General)

Photograph courtesy of Frederick H. Meserve
New York, N. Y.

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and homely but keen and trenchant.”⁷ From such illustrious forebears who rank high on the list of Kentucky’s imperishable names, Ben Hardin Helm was reared with a love for his country, his state and Southern institutions. Quite naturally he found his place in the aristocratic society of the South and not unlike his friends and neighbors he cherished the Union, but the key-stone of that governmental structure, in the light of his upbringing, was States Rights.⁸

Helm received his literary education in the Elizabethtown Seminary, where he displayed a prodigious mind by completing the prescribed course

⁷ John Randolph had a knack for calling Kentuckians degrading names. On one occasion he called Henry Clay “a being so brilliant and so corrupt, only to be compared, indeed, to one thing under the skies—a heap of rotten mackerel by moonlight, that shines and stinks.”

French, Samuel G.: *Two Wars: An Autobiography of Gen. Samuel G. French*. Confederate Veteran, Nashville, Tenn., 1901, page 124.

⁸ “In 1860 (Governor) Helm openly denounced the election of Lincoln and in the critical times that followed strove at first to preserve Kentucky’s neutrality, hoping eventually to have her join the South. During the war he was subjected to much inconvenience as a Confederate sympathizer.”

Dictionary of American Biography. Vol. VIII, pages 513-514.

“Her (Lucinda B. Helm) oldest brother went into the service of the Confederacy and was killed, and for a time her loved father was made prisoner, having been rudely taken from his home.”

Alexander, Arabel Wilbur: *The Life and Work of Lucinda B. Helm*, Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Nashville, Tenn., 1898, page 40.

There is a traditional story concerning Lincoln and Helm

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of study when he was only fifteen.⁹ Even at this tender age he decided upon a military career, but because of his youth he was unable to enter the West Point Military Academy immediately. Undaunted, he enrolled as a cadet in the Kentucky Military Institute in the winter of 1846. Cadet Helm remained at K.M.I. for only three months and then entered the United States Military Academy on July 1, 1847, shortly after his sixteenth birthday.¹⁰ After completing the regular four-year course he was graduated ninth in a class of forty-two members in 1851.¹¹ He was brevetted second-lieutenant in the Second Cavalry, July 1, 1851. However, before reporting for duty on the frontier

which is purely fictional but at the same time current in Kentucky. It is said that the old governor became so obstreperous in his sympathy for the Confederacy that he was put in prison, and that Lincoln had him released after writing the following order, "I hereby pardon John L. Helm of Kentucky for all that he has done against the United States and all that he ever will do."

McMurtry, R. Gerald: *A Series of Monographs Concerning The Lincolns and Hardin County, Kentucky*. The Enterprise Printery, Elizabethtown, Ky., 1938. Pages 35-36.

⁹ Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who In Hardin County*. "Ben Hardin Helm." *The Elizabethtown News*. November 26, 1940.

¹⁰ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The First Kentucky Brigade*. Caxton Publishing House, 1868. Page 338.

¹¹ Letter of Colonel S. Whipple, A. G. D., Adjutant General, Headquarters United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, to author, October 7, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

at Fort Lincoln, Texas, he attended the Cavalry School for Practice at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.¹²

While serving with his company, the "Second Dragoons," he unfortunately contracted inflammatory rheumatism, which rendered him totally unfit for a soldier's life. The seriousness of the attack, indeed, even precluded his chances for recovery, so he obtained a leave of absence and returned to his home in Kentucky.¹³ The six months he had spent in Texas with the Second Cavalry convinced him that he was best fitted for the military profession and he longed for the day when he could rejoin his comrades at Fort Lincoln.

But after taking up his residence in Kentucky, he gave considerable thought to the future and not unmindful of his health and the fact that there was small chance for attaining distinction in the army when the nation was at peace, he yielded to his father's wishes and resigned his commission on October 9, 1852¹⁴ This resignation from the army

¹²Cullum, George W.: *Biographical Register of The Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy, From 1802 to 1867*. James Miller, Publisher, New York City, 1879. Vol. II, page 284. Evidently Helm preferred the cavalry to any other branch of the service, because West Point graduates with high honors are usually assigned to the engineering corps of the army.

¹³ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 381.

¹⁴ *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Vol. III. Page 161.

necessitated his following an entirely new career after he had recovered his strength.

The Kentucky climate, along with the proper medical attention, enabled Helm to regain his health, which immediately added fuel to the fire of his ambition. He hoped to win renown in some worthwhile profession. Knowing that law is a trustworthy vehicle for politics, which has rocked in its cradle many a "darling of destiny," he resolved to enter that profession and immediately began to study under the direction of his distinguished father. The law-office course only convinced him of the necessity of adequate training and he enrolled in the School of Law of the University of Louisville, and graduated from that institution in the spring of 1853. Realizing the need for more advanced instruction he immediately entered the Harvard Law School at Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a six-months course, before returning to Elizabethtown to practice his profession with his father.¹⁵

The father and son partnership was of only a short duration and in 1856 he organized a law firm with Martin H. Cofer as his partner, which remained in existence until 1858 when he sought a more lucrative field for practice.¹⁶

¹⁵ All the biographical sketches of Helm state that he attended law school at Cambridge, Massachusetts, so it is assumed that he enrolled in the School of Law of Harvard University.

¹⁶ Martin Hardin Cofer was born in Hardin County, Ken-

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Going to the Kentucky metropolis, he was admitted to the Louisville bar and there he formed a partnership with Horatio W. Bruce, his brother-in-law.¹⁷ This partnership continued until 1861 when both men cast their lot with the Confederacy. As a member of the Louisville bar he displayed great talent, and this, along with his high sense of honor, his lofty purpose, and his unswerving integrity, distinguished him as one of the ablest lawyers practicing before the Kentucky courts.

With a military-legal education he always displayed a fine grasp of the strong points of the law and in conducting a case before the court he

tucky, on April 1, 1832. In 1853 he married a Miss Bush, a niece of Sarah Bush Johnston, the stepmother of Abraham Lincoln. As a lieutenant-colonel he commanded the Sixth Kentucky Regiment of Helm's First Kentucky Brigade. He took part in every engagement of his regiment up to the 30th of August, 1864, except the battle of Stone's River. He was severely wounded in the battle of Shiloh. For a biographical sketch see Ed Porter Thompson's work: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Pages 423-428.

¹⁷ Horatio W. Bruce married Elizabeth Barbour Helm, a daughter of Governor John L. Helm and Elizabeth Barbour Hardin. He was considered one of Kentucky's ablest lawyers. Kerr's *History of Kentucky*. Vol. IV, page 75.

He was a member of the State Rights party which met, by delegates, at Russellville, on November 18, 1861, for the purpose of organizing a provisional government for Kentucky, under which the state was to become a part of the Confederacy. Bruce represented Jefferson County and on January 22, 1862, he was elected a member of the provisional legislature from that district. Thompson, Ed Porter: *The History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 40.

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used the technique of a general coupled with "the astuteness of the hairsplitter." He attacked the vulnerable positions of his legal opponents, which as a cadet in the military academy he had been taught to determine in advance. When he was placed on the defensive, he so guarded his position as to exhaust and bewilder his opponents before they could center their attack. Complicated suits in chancery were of little concern to Ben Hardin Helm, who early in his legal career learned to comprehend quickly their exacting terms in the development of his cases for his clients.

Shortly after graduating from law school Helm entered politics and in 1855 he was chosen to represent Hardin County in the Kentucky General Assembly.¹⁸ As a state representative he assumed a place of distinction in the legislative chamber because of his legal knowledge and his astute grasp of governmental problems, seldom displayed by one of his age. Serving his county in this capacity for only one term, he next announced his candidacy for Commonwealth Attorney for his own judicial district (Third District of Kentucky), and won that office in 1856.¹⁹ He served in this position until

¹⁸ Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to author, March 31, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

Collins, Lewis & Richard H.: *History of Kentucky*. John P. Morton & Company, Louisville Kentucky, 1924, Vol. II, page 307.

¹⁹ Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who in*

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1858. The most remarkable thing about the career of this brilliant lawyer was that he had achieved all of these distinctions by the time that he had reached the age of twenty-eight.

While a member of the General Assembly, this eligible young politician met Miss Emilie Todd, a daughter of Robert S. Todd of Lexington, Kentucky.²⁰ Their friendship ripened into an affair of matrimony and on March 20, 1856, the couple was married in Frankfort, Kentucky, which was followed by a grand reception at Buena Vista, the country

Hardin County. "Ben Hardin Helm." *The Elizabethtown News*. November 26, 1940.

²⁰ "Robert S. Todd, seventh child of Gen. Levi Todd, was born near Lexington, Ky., February 25, 1791, and died July 15 (6), 1849. When about 30 years old he was elected clerk of the Kentucky House of Representatives, and, by successive elections, held the position for twenty years; he was then three times elected representative from Fayette County; in 1845 was elected to the State Senate, and was a candidate for re-election when he died. He was twice married; first to his near relative, Eliza Ann Parker, a granddaughter of General Andrew Porter. They had six children, Elizabeth, Levi, George, Frances, Mary and Ann. Mary was the wife of President Lincoln, and Elizabeth married Ninian W. Edwards, February 16, 1832." Taken from *Historic Sketches of The Edwards and Todd Families and Their Descendants 1523-1895*, by Georgie Hortense Edwards, Springfield, Illinois, 1894. Reprinted in *The Lincoln Kinsmen*, No. 26. August, 1940. Page 4.

In the biography *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln a Study of Her Personality and Her Influence on Lincoln*, by W. A. Evans, page 51, the given name of Mrs. Ben Hardin Helm is listed as "Emilie P." Mrs. Helm was named after the wife of her uncle, Alexander Humphreys, Emilie Paret of New Orleans. Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to author, June 13, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

home of the Todds.²¹ Mrs. Helm like her half sister, Mrs. Lincoln, was accomplished in the cultural arts which the "Athens of the West" afforded in her day. Being an aristocratic and estimable lady this marriage was looked upon with favor by both the Todd and Helm families and the young matron endeared herself to all of her husband's Elizabethtown friends.

In 1857, while still practicing law in his home town, Helm had an opportunity to go to Springfield, Illinois, to argue a case before the courts of that capital city. This afforded him an opportunity to visit his kinsmen and to extend to Mary Todd Lincoln the sincerest and best wishes of his wife who was

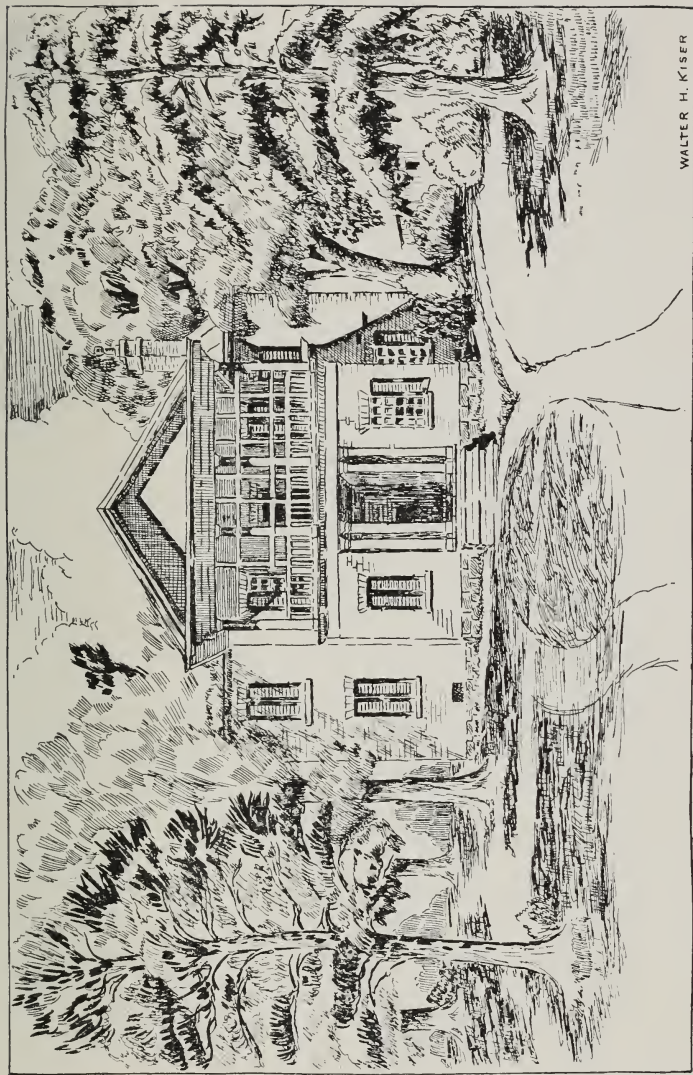
²¹ "Mr. Edwards told father that Cousin Emily was to be married in March, he mentioned the gentleman's name but not knowing him we have forgotten. I asked father a dozen questions who he was—where he lived, etc., but he said I was in possession of all he knew about it—and so must be content." Letter of Mrs. John T. Stuart to her daughter, Elizabeth J., Springfield, Thursday, March 6, 1856. Original letter owned by the heirs of Stuart Brown, of Springfield, Illinois.

"The marriage was in Frankfort, Ky., and the reception at her mother's home."

Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to Mrs. L. B. Hoke, Elizabethtown, Ky., June 29, 1940, Files of the Department of Lincolniana. Buena Vista is situated on the Frankfort Pike in Franklin County, Kentucky, about eight miles from Frankfort and eighteen miles from Lexington.

"Cousin Emily has declined coming out to Illinois on her bridal tour. It seems her husband is a lawyer and cannot leave his courts and it has been concluded that instead the bridal trip to Memphis and Illinois she has concluded to go around the Circuit with him."

Letter of John T. Stuart to his daughter Elizabeth J., Sunday night, March 23, 1856. Original letter owned by the heirs of Stuart Brown.



THE HOME OF GOVERNOR JOHN L. HELM

Ben Hardin Helm lived in this Elizabethtown mansion until he moved to Louisville to practice law. Drawing used with the permission of Walter H. Kiser and *The Louisville Courier-Journal and Times*, Louisville, Kentucky.

familiarly known to all her relatives as "Little Sister." Mrs. Lincoln had never before had an opportunity to meet the distinguished husband of Emilie and she greeted him cordially as a brother-in-law and fellow Kentuckian. Mary Lincoln saw for herself that he was truly handsome, being six feet tall and having a well-proportioned figure which gave evidence of military training. She liked his penetrating blue eyes, his brown hair which blended with his ruddy complexion, and his genial and attractive countenance which lighted up at the slightest provocation. In receiving Helm in his home as a guest Lincoln did not forget that this young man was the grandson of the "kitchen-knife whetted on a brick." The Lincolns knew how to be hospitable and they entertained the Kentucky attorney for a week.²²

Helm was a States Rights Democrat and Lincoln was a Republican and when their conversation drifted around to politics they could not agree. With Mary they discussed the slavery question from the date of its inception down to the year of the Dred Scott decision, and Helm believed the border states might be willing to adopt a plan of gradual compensated emancipation, but as a matter of principle this scion of the old South who knew the people of the cotton belt said the planter would never yield

²²Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Harper & Brothers publishers, 1928. Pages 126-130.

to such a proposal. But there were topics of conversation more pleasant than politics and Lincoln soon learned that his guest was versed in all the traditions of Hardin County and he delighted in asking him questions about his old home. During this brief visit a lasting friendship was formed. When Helm bade the Lincolns good-bye upon his departure for Kentucky, none of them realized what a turmoil the country would be facing in four years when Helm would lead a Southern army and Lincoln would find himself on the crest of a volcanic government.²³

As the country moved toward civil war Helm argued that there would be no conflict. He would not believe it possible that the American people could be so aroused as to divide into two sections and turn and rend each other. Yet he had foresight enough to feel that he should re-enter the military service.²⁴ In 1860 he was appointed Assistant-

²³Emilie Todd Helm visited Mrs. Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois, in 1856, a year before her husband went there on business. Evans, W. A.: *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln*. Page 289.

At the outbreak of the Civil War the slaves of Governor John L. Helm were valued at forty thousand dollars.

Mary Helm, in her reminiscences of her father and mother, said, "My father owned sixty negroes."

Alexander, Arabel Wilbur: *The Life and Work of Lucinda B. Helm*, page 22.

²⁴ "He went to Washington to see Mr. Lincoln, with a view of again entering the regular army, which he sincerely wished to do, having never been satisfied with his profession as a lawyer."

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Inspector General of the Kentucky State Guard and he took an active part in organizing and arming that body of fighting men.²⁵ This was the year of the presidential election and he watched with anxiety the comet-like rise of Abraham Lincoln across the political horizon. He admired the man but he could not vote for him. In fact, Helm was so imbued with the political principles of his fathers that he worked against his brother-in-law's candidacy. For whom he voted there appears to be no record, but it is not at all difficult to hazard a guess that the man of his choice was that esteemed Whig of the old school, John Bell, who ran for the presidency on the Constitutional Union ticket.²⁶

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of the Orphan Brigade*. Page 382.

²⁵ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of the First Kentucky Brigade*. Page 340.

²⁶ During Lincoln's campaign for the presidency he wrote Samuel Haycraft, Jr., on June 4, 1860, and among other things he mentioned the name of his brother-in-law; "It may not be altogether without interest to let you know that my wife is a daughter of the late Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Ky., and that a half-sister of hers is the wife of Ben Hardin Helm, born and raised at your town, but residing at Louisville now, as I believe." Nicolay & Hay: *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Vol. VI. Page 39.

Ex-Gov. John L. Helm presided over the Constitutional Union (Bell & Everett) Convention which assembled in Louisville on January 8, 1861. The governor's support of John Bell might indicate that Ben Hardin Helm cast his vote for that candidate. Collins: *History of Kentucky*. Vol. I, page 85.

At the time of the 1860 presidential election Ben Hardin Helm was a resident of Louisville, and that city cast 3,823 votes

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Yet in spite of the States Rights Democrats and the advocates of agrarian principles, Abraham Lincoln was elected president and the Southern movement, which is a rather mild way to describe secession, was inaugurated. It was soon apparent to Helm that he must decide upon his future course, and in March, 1861, he went to Washington in quest of a commission. Having a professional connection with the army he had a reverence for the country's flag which to him had always symbolized one nation, and not a hodge-podge of confederations. Yet he was a Kentuckian and a son of the South and he determined that regardless of the consequences he would never turn upon his own native soil.²⁷ Helm still clung to one hope — that the indignation of the South against the incoming Lincoln administration would subside and that all would be peaceful again. But like many other rational men, who had no solution to cope with

for Bell, 2,633 for Douglas, 845 for Breckinridge and 91 for Lincoln. In the final tabulation Bell carried the state of Kentucky. *Lincoln Lore*: Edited by Dr. Louis A. Warren. "Stray Ballots—1860." No. 30. Nov. 4, 1929.

²⁷ The Constitutional Union Convention of January 8, 1861, at Louisville, Ky., over which Ex-Governor John L. Helm presided, adopted the following resolution: "Resolved, That we deplore the existence of a Union to be held together by the sword, with laws to be enforced by standing armies; it is not such a Union as our fathers intended, and not worth preserving." Ben Hardin Helm may have been influenced by his father to the extent that he would concur with this resolution.

Collins: *History of Kentucky*. Vol. I. Page 86.

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the situation, he watched helplessly the division of the Union.

At the time when the secession movement was still confined to the deep South, Helm made a second trip to Washington to visit the President. This time he traveled to the capitol because he had received a cordial personal invitation from the Chief Executive, who was cognizant of the fact that Helm was thinking of again entering the army of the United States. Even at the time when the nation's eyes were focused upon Major Robert Anderson at Fort Sumter and there was talk about whether or not that island fortress should be surrendered to the Confederate government he could not believe there would be a war.

In spite of his success in the legal profession, Ben Hardin Helm's first love was the army. Lincoln knew he was still a strong Southern-Rights Democrat, yet not because of this, but in spite of it he handed the young man a sealed envelope, containing an attractive offer of a position. "Ben" he said, "here is something for you. Think it over by yourself and let me know what you will do."²⁸

²⁸ Townsend, William H.: *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, Ind. 1929. Page 307.

Elizabeth J. Grimsley, Mrs. Lincoln's cousin, wrote (original letter in Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois) from the White House, March 21, 1861, "Mr. Hardin

Lincoln anticipated the struggle Helm would have in accepting or rejecting the commission he had secured for him because day by day the country was approaching nearer to the opening of hostilities. In fact Lincoln was even willing to hold out another inducement, namely that to prevent him from using his sword directly or indirectly for the coercion of the Southern states and against the people of Kentucky he would be sent to the frontier and be spared the horrors of a fratricidal war.²⁹

The sealed envelope contained a coveted commission — paymaster in the United States army with the rank of major. What was more, it was highly probable that promotions might come as he gained favor and as the army was expanded to meet the ominous crisis. The offer stunned Helm when he considered that this position was presented to him at the age of thirty. Such a commission was exceptional for his years, and during his entire career nothing so attractive as this offer had ever be-

Helm came yesterday. Wants to return to the army." Katherine Helm in her book *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 183, states that "About the middle of April, 1861, Ben Hardin Helm went to Washington in response to a cordial personal letter of invitation from his brother-in-law, President Lincoln," and that "on the 27th of April he (Lincoln) handed him a (commission) sealed envelope." It appears from these statements that Ben Hardin Helm made two trips to Washington in quest of an army commission.

²⁹ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 875.

fore appealed to him. The office of paymaster with the rank of major was far more important than anything he had expected from Lincoln or had even imagined in his most fitful dreams. It was the ideal position for Helm because of his clerical abilities as a result of his work in the legal profession.

This magnanimous offer on the part of Lincoln brought from Helm a confession. "The position you offer me," he said, "is beyond what I had expected in my most hopeful dreams. It is the place above all others which suits me, Lincoln. You have been kind and generous to me beyond anything I have known. I have no claim upon you, for I opposed your candidacy and did what I could for the election of another, but with no unkindly feeling towards you; I wish I could see my way. I will try to do what is right. Don't let this offer be made public yet. You shall have my answer in a few days."

It appears that destiny had a hand in making Helm determine his course. In Washington he sought out his old friends — Southern friends, and they exerted an undue influence upon him. Yet he likely would have reached the same conclusion even if he had discounted the advice of his old comrades. On the same day he had received Lincoln's offer Helm called upon Colonel Robert

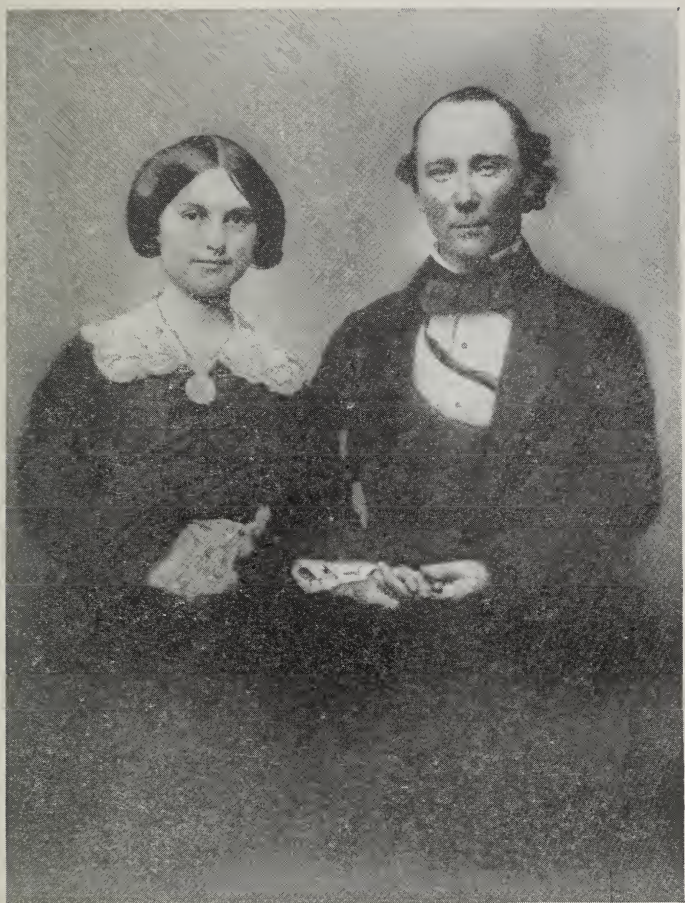
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E. Lee, recently attached to the Second Cavalry, the same regiment he had been stationed with in Texas shortly after his graduation from West Point. Helm found Colonel Lee in a dilemma. He appeared ill or as if weighted down by some unfortunate difficulty. The Colonel was well enough in body but temporarily broken in spirit because he had made a fateful decision. He had resigned on April 20th his commission in the United States army.

In such a mental state Colonel Lee did not care to offer Helm any advice and after reading Lincoln's offer of a commission and being apprised of the fact that the president was Helm's brother-in-law the experienced soldier told his friend that there was going to be a dreadful war and he had determined that he would not strike at his own people. However, he did not doubt Lincoln's sincerity, but he told Helm the president could not control the present trend of political chaos.

Mary Lincoln hoped Helm would accept the commission in order that she might have her attractive sister with her in the Executive Mansion. She would be the toast of Washington and the belle of every presidential reception. She told Ben that the country needed "scholarly, dignified young men in the army," but such statements only made the decision harder to determine.³⁰

³⁰ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Page 184-186.
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MR. & MRS. BEN HARDIN HELM

Photograph made in 1857

Photograph used with the permission of Mr. Ben Hardin Helm and
Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis, Lexington, Kentucky.

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In thinking over the matter of the commission Helm realized he would be the youngest officer in the army to hold the rank of major, and with such a start he might, by transferring to one of the cavalry regiments, become a colonel within a year's time. He was ambitious and in his pocket was a brilliant career folded and sealed in an envelope from the president of the United States. The only thing he would be required to do would be to accept it. Also, he had great admiration for Lincoln, he was fond of his sister-in-law, and his wife would delight in the gaieties of Washington society.

Upon his departure for Kentucky he bade Mary Lincoln farewell and again she expressed the desire that both he and Emilie would make their home with them in the Executive Mansion. As a farewell gesture Helm clasped Lincoln's hand and then parted. This was the Lincolns' last glimpse of their fine, upstanding brother-in-law.

Upon Helm's arrival at home he went to

A paymaster with the rank of major received a total of \$187 a month. This represented a salary of \$80, and, in addition, \$36 for rations, \$24 for forage for three horses, and \$47 for two servants.

War Department Archives — *Official Army Register*, 1860. Pages 44-45.

Letter of Ronald F. Lee, Supervisor of Historic Sites, National Park Service to author, April 13, 1942, Files of Department of Lincolniana.

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Frankfort and while in the state capital he met Simon Bolivar Buckner, who was then Inspector-General of the Kentucky State Guard with the rank of major-general. Buckner had been Helm's instructor at West Point and their warm friendship and his high regard for Buckner's judgment caused his loyalty to the Union to waver. Buckner was going with the Confederacy and this fact caused Helm to lean further toward the South in the approaching conflict.³¹ Next he talked with Thomas B. Monroe, Jr., Secretary of State of Kentucky and a staunch defender of States Rights.³² Helm called on other friends and discovered that their sympathies were also with the South.

Kentucky at this time was in great turmoil

³¹ General Buckner was an assistant instructor in infantry tactics at West Point from July, 1848 to January, 1850. Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 354. He was also assistant professor of geography, history and ethics and he instructed cadets in gymnastics.

Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who In Hardin County*. "Simon Bolivar Buckner," *The Hardin County Enterprise*, March 31, 1942.

³² "On the accession of Magoffin to the governorship, Mr. Monroe was made Secretary of State, the youngest man, perhaps, who ever held such a position in the United States, and when Mr. Lincoln had been elected, and the Southern movement was inaugurated, his manly, straightforward nature looked with abhorrence upon the thought of any double-dealing or equivocation on the part of his state, and he assumed that it was the duty of Kentucky to ally herself promptly with the South, and to natures like his, duty and interest are of convertible signification."

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The First Kentucky Brigade*. Page 446.

over the secession movement and Helm could not stand idly by and watch the approach of disaster.³³ He was not a man to "halt between two opinions." He realized he could no longer delay making his decision, because this conflict would be a civil war and he did not intend to fight against his own cherished principles.

Helm's Southern leanings were undoubtedly strengthened by Governor Beriah Magoffin's reply to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, who asked Kentucky for four regiments of militia for immediate service. His dispatch dated April 15, 1861 stated, "I say, emphatically, Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States."³⁴ Accordingly, he penned a let-

³³ "In no deliberative or parliamentary body in the whole country had the exciting questions of the day been more earnestly or more fully discussed. The legislature had been in session almost continuously during a year and a half. There was not a day nor an hour during that long deliberation, in which these questions did not press themselves persistently for settlement. No member but was impressed with their all-pervading importance; and with all the earnestness, eloquence and ardor manifesting themselves in the numerous debates, there was no interruptions of kindly relations. The ties of personal friendship remained unbroken to the end. When the final session closed, as its members parted, and clasped hands in adieu, they bid each other God speed—well knowing that commissions in the Federal army were already signed for many, and that for many more Confederate soldiers were waiting as leaders; knowing, too, that when they met again to argue the question, it would be at the assize of blood, and be decided by wager of battle." Collins: *History of Kentucky*. Vol. I, pages 341-342.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Page 87.

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ter to Lincoln declining the commission and his refusal was recorded by the War Department with the following entry:

“Helm, Ben Hardin, nominated for paymaster in the United States Army, April 27, 1861. Declined.”³⁵

Nevertheless, Helm remained grateful to Lincoln for his kind offer and even after he had taken the field at the head of Confederate troops he sent felicitous messages to the president in 1861 and 1862.³⁶

³⁵ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Page 187.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, page 88. The nature of the kindly messages addressed by General Helm to the president in 1861 and 1862 are not revealed.

The Path of Glory

II.

HAVING embraced the cause of the South "with all the enthusiasm of his extremely ardent and enthusiastic nature," Helm visited the Confederate capital at Montgomery, Alabama to pay his respects to Jefferson Davis and to offer his services for military duty to help the Southern cause. The provisional president of the Confederacy informed Helm that the South already had more troops than they could adequately arm and equip. Davis suggested to Helm that he return to Kentucky and work from a political angle in an attempt to bring his native state into the Confederacy and help win independence for all of the slave states.³⁷

Helm was a soldier and not a politician and his interest in military affairs caused him first to affiliate with the Kentucky State Militia in attempting to establish a condition of strict neutrality.³⁸

³⁷ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 383.

³⁸ On May 24, 1861 the Senate of Kentucky adopted the following resolution of strict neutrality:

"Resolved, That Kentucky will not sever her connection with the national government, nor will she take up arms for either of the belligerent parties; but will arm herself for the one purpose of preserving tranquility and peace within her own borders."

Collins: *History of Kentucky*. Vol. I, page 91.

In the spring of 1861 he took up his work as the Assistant Inspector General of the State Guard and on several occasions he was ordered to enforce upon the people of Kentucky the neutrality policy which soon was proven to be impracticable.³⁹ Later he used his influence to recruit for the Confederacy the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry. His reputation in Kentucky was such that:

"One blast upon his bugle-horn was worth a thousand men."⁴⁰

The soldiers for the First Regiment of Cavalry were recruited from the different sections of the state and the leadership of Helm was of such a character as to attract a superior class of men to the colors, not usually found in other organizations of the same numerical strength. For this work Helm received from his government a colonel's commission in September, 1861 and he took command of the ten companies which constituted the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry.⁴¹ These men

³⁹ "Inspector-general S. B. Buckner orders (June 24, 1861) six companies State Guards, under Col. Lloyd Tilghman, to Columbus, Ky., to preserve the neutrality of the state in that neighborhood. Col. T. resigns, and is succeeded by Col. Ben Hardin Helm."

Ibid., Vol. I, page 92.

⁴⁰ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 875.

⁴¹ The ten companies which constituted the First Kentucky Regiment of cavalry were: "Co. A, designated according to first formation, was recruited chiefly in Christian, Todd, and Trigg

were mustered into the Confederate army at Bowling Green, Kentucky and their colonel instituted a training routine which soon transformed the raw recruits into an army of trained soldiers. Helm's training routine was "company drill in the forenoon, regimental drill in the afternoon, brigade drill on Friday, inspection on Saturday, saber exercise between times and guard and fatigue duty to occupy leisure hours."⁴² However, in spite of the arduous tasks the personal influence of Colonel Helm was felt by every man in his command. He was kind and affable to his troops, but at the same time he maintained a military dignity that did not breed contempt. The men of the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry were all of the opinion that their leader was professionally skilled, which of course was a comfort to every soldier in his command.

While Helm's regiment was in training in Southern Kentucky they engaged in outpost and scout duty, and this body of troops became a kind of corps of observation.⁴³ Even when the Con-

Counties; Co. B in Christian and contiguous counties; Co. C in the five counties around Masonville, Daveiss County; Company D in Hancock and Mead; Co. E in Jefferson and Oldham; Co. F in Union; Co. G in Warren; Co. H in Christian; Companies I and K in Hopkins, Webster and Caldwell."

Ibid., page 876.

⁴² *Ibid.*, page 876.

⁴³ *The War of The Rebellion: A Compilation of The Official Records of The Union and Confederate Armies.* Gov-

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federate army abandoned Bowling Green, it was Colonel Helm's duty to cover the retreat. Arriving in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, February 23, 1862, he was placed under the orders of General John C. Breckinridge, where his regiment was temporarily brigaded with the Kentucky Infantry.⁴⁴ Upon receiving an order to observe the movements of the Union forces on the Tennessee River, he took up his station at Burnsville, Mississippi, and guarded the approaches to the town of Corinth.⁴⁵

Knowing of his experience in scout duty and regarding him as a capable officer General Albert Sidney Johnston sent Helm on a tour of observation of the territory between the Union position on the Tennessee and Nashville. Taking with him a select body of cavalymen, Colonel Helm set out for his duties around the latter part of March and during the first few days of April he reported to Johnston the rapid approach of the Union general, Don Carlos Buell, and he indicated that it was likely he would be able to join General U. S. Grant's forces on April 6th.⁴⁶

ernment Printing Office, 1882. Series I, Vol. VII, pages 830-831. Hereafter this work will be referred to only by the short title of *Official Records*.

⁴⁴ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The First Kentucky Brigade*. Page 342.

⁴⁵ *Official Records*: Series I, Vol. X, part II, pages 327-328.

⁴⁶ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The First Kentucky Brigade*. Page 342.



LIEUTENANT
ALEXANDER H. TODD

Aide-de-camp on the staff of General Ben Hardin Helm while he commanded the Second Brigade.

Photograph of original portrait used with the permission of Mr. Ben Hardin Helm and Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis, Lexington, Kentucky.

LIEUTENANT
WM. WALLACE HERR

Aide-de-camp on the staff of General Ben Hardin Helm while he commanded the First Kentucky Brigade.

Photograph taken from Ed Porter Thompson's book, *The History of the Orphan Brigade*.



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Johnston, basing his plans upon Colonel Helm's observations, planned to attack Grant on April 4th, before he could be re-enforced by Buell, but he was prevented from doing this because of the difficulty of transporting his artillery over the wet and soft country roads. The failure to attack Grant before he was re-enforced by Buell resulted in a defeat for the Confederate forces and the death of the able Kentuckian, General Johnston.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ It is the opinion of Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941, page 138, that the Confederate forces under the command of Albert Sidney Johnston and Pierre G. T. Beauregard at Shiloh were "the victim of a sadly inexperienced intelligence service."

According to Brigadier-General Thomas Jordan (Adjutant-General of the Confederate army) a telegram was received from Colonel Helm addressed to General Johnston a few hours before the close of the first day of the battle of Shiloh. It was believed by Jordan that the dispatch came from the direction of Athens, Tennessee. The telegram from Helm stated "that scouts employed in observing General Buell's movements reported him to be marching not toward a junction with Grant, but in the direction of Decatur, North Alabama."

Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Grant-Lee Edition, The Century Co., Vol. I, part II, page 602.

General Buell marched his five divisions from Nashville to Savannah (Tenn.) to effect a juncture with Grant's Army, and after studying a map of Tennessee it is hard to believe that Colonel Helm could have effectively observed Buell's march from Athens located in the eastern part of that state.

Force, M. F.: *Campaigns of The Civil War—II. From Fort Henry to Corinth*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881. Pages 104-106.

According to Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, page 138, Colonel Helm is referred to as "a cavalry commander in northern Alabama." This is difficult to understand because Helm was ordered "on a tour of observation between the Federal position on the river (Tennessee) and Nashville."

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During the battle of Shiloh Helm's command, the First Kentucky Cavalry, was required to hold its position on the Tennessee, to guard the approaches to Johnston's left and rear and with such an assignment they found no opportunity for brilliant action. A detailed account of the activities of Colonel Helm at the time of the battle of Shiloh has never been revealed due to the secret nature of his work in scouting the enemy. Nevertheless, his efforts were observed by his superior officers and won for him the warm encomiums of those who understood the importance of his mission.

After Shiloh Colonel Helm found himself in line for promotion and on April 17, 1862 General Pierre G. T. Beauregard announced he was to become a brigadier-general with the appointment predated March 14th.⁴⁸ Brigadier General Helm was then ordered to report to General Breckinridge, which he was able to do on the 26th of April. He was then assigned to the command of the Third Brigade of Infantry of the Reserve Corps, which consisted of Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri regiments.⁴⁹ Helm was disappointed with his

Thompson, Ed Porter: *The History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 383.

⁴⁸ Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to author. March 31, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolnia.

⁴⁹ The Third Brigade consisted of the 9th Arkansas, 10th Arkansas, 6th Mississippi, 1st Missouri and Watson's Battery. *Official Records*. Series I, Vol. X, part II.

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command because he had under him no Kentucky troops. This condition, however, did not exist for any lengthy period of time, because on July 8th, at Vicksburg, another change was made in the Reserve Corps, when the regiments under Brigadier General J. M. Hawes were designated as the Second Brigade and placed under the command of General Helm. The troops of this brigade consisted of men from Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi.⁵⁰

Upon assuming command of the Second Brigade, General Helm appointed his staff and among the half dozen competent officers whom he named, he picked Major Thomas H. Hayes, his brother-in-law and a resident of Hardin County, Kentucky, and Lieutenant Alexander H. Todd, of Lexington, another brother-in-law, to act in the capacity of assistant inspector general and aide-de-camp respectfully.⁵¹ These men were destined to

⁵⁰ The Second Brigade consisted of the 4th Kentucky, 9th Kentucky, 4th Alabama, 31st Alabama, 31st Mississippi, and Hudson's Battery. Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of the Orphan Brigade*.

⁵¹ Major Thomas Hayes in 1861 married Sarah Hardin Helm, a daughter of Governor John L. Helm.

Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who In Hardin County*. "Major Thomas H. Hayes." *The Elizabethtown News*, July 22, 1941.

Lieutenant Alexander H. Todd was the youngest of the Todd brothers. He is described as having been handsome, and with a winning personality. He was idolized by his family and evidently had an interesting career before him. He was killed at the age of twenty-three.

"Shortly before the Civil War broke out Alexander Todd came to

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see action within the month at the battle of Baton Rouge. It was the plan of General Breckinridge to capture that place, with the assistance of the immense iron-clad ram, the *Arkansas*, which was to cooperate with his land force. The city was occupied by a Union army under the command of General Thomas Williams, who was successful, although he lost his life, in driving Breckinridge back.⁵² Shortly before the attack on Baton Rouge on August 5th, Breckinridge's men were waiting for daylight in order to make a charge when an unfortunate accident occurred. Some mounted rangers were placed behind the artillery and infantry, but in the

Muhlenberg County (Kentucky) to look after . . . land for his uncle (D. C. Humphreys), and with a view of making this his permanent home. Alexander Todd, having received a special invitation from Abraham Lincoln, went from Muhlenberg County to Washington City to witness the inauguration of his brother-in-law, March 4, 1861."

Rothert, Otto A.: *A History of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky*, 1913, page 275.

According to Katherine Helm, *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 213, the news of Alexander Todd's death caused her (Mrs. Lincoln) to fall to her knees and weep, exclaiming, "Oh, little Aleck, why had you too to die!" However, Elizabeth Keckley, the negro dress-maker of Mrs. Lincoln, in her book *Behind the Scenes*, pages 135-136, stated that her mistress related she was not grieved over the death of her brother "to the extent that you suppose." She said he had made his choice long ago, that he was her husband's enemy and that she saw no special reason why she should bitterly mourn his death.

⁵²Johnson, Rossiter: *The Story of A Great Conflict, A History of The War of Secession, 1861-1865*. Byran, Taylor & Co. 1894, pages 271-272.

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darkness they eased forward because they were eager to get into the fray, and in riding to the front they encountered Union sentries. This caused an exchange of shots to be fired. The Confederate rangers then galloped back to their own lines amidst a hail of fire, and this action provoked additional firing between the Confederate troops and their mounted horsemen.⁵³

The results were tragic and among other casualties Brigadier General Helm was dangerously injured by a fall from his horse, being knocked over and contused by the running cavalry.⁵⁴ Lieutenant Todd, Mrs. Lincoln's half-brother, was killed from one of the aimless shots that was fired during the confusion.⁵⁵ He was the second brother to lose

⁵³ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*. Page 124.

⁵⁴ Letter of W. S. Rosecrans to General U. S. Grant, August 19, 1862. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XVII, part II, page 181.

⁵⁵ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 996.

A few months later Lincoln received another such shock concerning the death of a Captain Todd. He wired Governor Johnson, at Nashville, Tennessee, on January 8, 1863, the following message:

"A despatch of yesterday from Nashville says the body of Captain Todd, of the Sixth Kentucky, was brought in today.

Please tell me what was his Christian name, and whether he was in our service or that of the enemy."

Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works* (Two Volume Edition) Vol. II, page 297.

Regimental records reveal that a man named Thomas Todd, of Hopkins County (Kentucky), died of disease at Oakland Station,

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his life, as Samuel Todd was killed while serving with a Louisiana regiment at Shiloh.⁵⁶ The death of this young lieutenant, who as a child had played with Robert Lincoln, must have saddened the president's household.⁵⁷

General Helm's injury was of such a serious nature as to render him disabled for weeks, and Colonel Thomas H. Hunt, who had immediately assumed command of his brigade in the action before Baton Rouge, was given temporary command of the troops while his commander recovered.⁵⁸ By September, General Helm was again able to report for duty and he was assigned the command of the post of Chattanooga.⁵⁹ Later he was transferred to

January, 1863. The identity of this man might have caused him to be confused with one of the Todd brothers of Lexington. Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 651.

⁵⁶ Leech, Margaret: *Reveille in Washington 1860-1865*. Harper & Brothers, page 305.

⁵⁷ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Page 103.

⁵⁸ Upon assuming command of Helm's Brigade at Baton Rouge, Colonel Thomas H. Hunt advanced toward the enemy until he was dangerously wounded and rendered incapable of further action.

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, Page 432.

⁵⁹*Ibid*, page 343.

"Mrs. Helm . . . followed her husband south spending a short while with him at Athens, Tennessee and on to Chattanooga, where he was stationed. While staying here she was moved with pity for the large number of sick and wounded men who were in the city in charge of General Anderson. For the poor, weary, heart sick fellows there was no food, no beds, no medicine. They lay upon the bare floor of the public buildings, in stores, or where ever they could find shelter. There was opportunity for a woman to act the

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the command of the Eastern District, Department of the Gulf, with headquarters at Pollard, Alabama. This transfer was made after General Braxton Bragg's army had passed Chattanooga on his retreat from Kentucky. The reason for assigning General Helm to the Department of the Gulf was due to the Confederate's apprehensions of an advance on the part of the Federals operating from Pensacola.⁶⁰

A few months later the Confederate government found a more important assignment for General Helm. By the direction of President Davis, he was ordered on January 31, 1863 to relinquish his command of the Eastern District, Department of the Gulf, and to report to General William Joseph Hardee for the command of the brigade of the late Brigadier General Roger W. Hanson who

part of a general and she did. Mrs. Helm, then in the height of her youth and beauty quickly organized a band of southern women, bought cotton by the bolts, thread, and a load of fresh clean hay. The little office where her husband was quartered swarmed with beautiful laughing girls and needles flew for five days in which time 1200 cots were made for the sick to lie upon. Around them surged the unrest and confusion of conflict, the narrow room was a highway for soldiers who came to get orders, the baggage of the dead lay there unclaimed or awaiting return to broken homes, the tread of many feet came carelessly; but the women worked on oblivious of all save a tender purpose."

Unpublished manuscript entitled "Benjamin Hardin Helm" by Mrs. Emma Middleton Wells. Files of the Hardin County Historical Society, Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

⁶⁰ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 384.

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had been killed at the battle of Stone's River.⁶¹ Hardee ordered Helm to report to Breckinridge for the command of the First Kentucky Brigade, which consisted of the Second, Fourth, Sixth, and Ninth Kentucky Regiments, Forty-first Alabama Regiment, and Captain Robert L. Cobbs' (Kentucky) Battery.⁶² Helm was delighted with the assignment because of the great number of Kentuckians found in his command. His men had unusual confidence in his leadership and the morale of the brigade was greatly enhanced. General Helm took up his assignment on Feb. 16, 1863, and he immediately selected his staff officers. Of the seven men who were chosen two were from his home community of Hardin County and one of his aides-de-camp was Lieutenant William Wallace Herr, who married in January, 1866 Katherine Bodley ("Kitty") Todd, the sister of Mrs. Helm and a half-sister of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.⁶³

⁶¹ *Official Records*. Series I, Vol. XXIII, part II, Page 622. Colonel Thomas H. Hunt, the temporary commander of the brigade, was ordered to resume the command of his regiment.
Ibid. Series I, Vol. XXIII, part II, page 636.

⁶² *Ibid.* Series I, Vol. XXIII, part II, page 620.

⁶³ Biographical Sketch of William Wallace Herr.
Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, pages 987-992.

Mrs. Lincoln never had the opportunity to see or to make the acquaintance of W. W. Herr.

Evans, W. A.: *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln*, page 175.

Before the Civil War began Miss Kitty Todd left her home in Lexington, Kentucky, to visit her sister Mrs. N. H. R. Dawson of

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For several months the First Kentucky Brigade, which was a part of the division commanded by General Breckinridge, was more or less idle. While they were stationed in middle Tennessee at Wartrace, Manchester, Beech Grove and Hoover's Gap, General Helm drilled his men and became active in his duties as a commander. When Breckinridge was absent it devolved upon him to command the division, which was good training for a

Selma, Alabama. With the opening of hostilities her visit in the South was prolonged until the winter of 1862 when General Helm was made the commandant of the post of Chattanooga. While she was but nineteen years of age, she had considerable prestige, being the half-sister of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln and a full sister of Mrs. Helm. She became dissatisfied over her enforced residence in Alabama and appealed to General Helm for a pass to allow her to travel through the Confederate lines. As her passage over the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was considered dangerous, because of the fact that the line was under the control of Federal troops as far South as Murfreesboro, it was arranged for her to travel by horse and buggy with Dr. Robert Spalding as far north as Uniontown, Kentucky, accompanied by an escort from the First Kentucky Cavalry. With this bodyguard she traveled in the fashion of a queen, except for night travel in the country infested with Federal troops. Leaving her gallant escort of Confederate cavalry on the top of the hill back of Uniontown, she proceeded to that community on foot and there found friends who were waiting to protect her. From Uniontown she took passage on an up-river steamer and proceeded unnoticed as far as Louisville. In that city her identity was known and the officer in command threatened to send her back South. Then someone notified Mr. Lincoln who, it is said, curtly telegraphed the Federal officer "to stick to his own business." This order from the president was sufficient to release her and she proceeded by rail to Lexington.

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigadier*, page 893-894.

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brigadier.⁶⁴ Due to the fact that time and again their divisional or brigade commander was absent, or transferred to other commands, or killed in battle, the expatriated Kentuckians often thought of their brigade as an orphan—hence the use of the name “Orphan Brigade” later became current.

While waiting for orders the First Kentucky Brigade was challenged by the brigade of General Daniel Adams for competitive drill, and the bid was accepted by General Helm. The regiments now contended for the championship of the army and not simply for the division, because it was admitted that Adams’ brigade was one of the best drilled in the Army of Tennessee and the Kentuckians claimed they could beat “the world on anything required of soldiers.”⁶⁵ The drills got under way and the competition was so keen that many high ranking officers of the Confederate army were present to witness the exhibitions. Even his excellency Jefferson Davis was apprised of the event and in a letter to the president dated April 15, 1863, Colonel William Preston Johnston stated that the Kentucky Brigade commanded by General Helm had in their performance indicated that they were “rapid, yet precise,” that “in

⁶⁴ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIII, part II, page 790.

⁶⁵ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, pages 205-206.

appearance" they were "tough and active and they will compare for efficiency with any brigade in the Confederate army."⁶⁶ Before the drills had ended the division of Breckinridge was ordered on an expedition into Mississippi, but the general consensus of opinion was that the Kentuckians were the best trained.

Breckinridge's men did not relish the Mississippi expedition. They felt that expatriated Mississippians should be ordered to that theatre of war. The Kentuckians desired to stay somewhat near their own home state, and they let General Breckinridge know how they felt about the matter.⁶⁷ He then took up the question with General Bragg, who left the decision up to Breckinridge. At this time a coolness existed between Bragg and Breckinridge because of their disagreement over tactical questions during the battle of Stone's River or Murfreesboro.⁶⁸ Breckinridge's men found how the matter stood, and when they realized that to go with Breckinridge would be to support him against Bragg, the entire division started on the Mississippi campaign.⁶⁹ The object of the expedition was to re-

⁶⁶ *Official Records*. Series I, Vol. XXIII, part II, page 757.

⁶⁷ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, pages 206-207.

⁶⁸ Horn, Stanley F.: *The Army of Tennessee*, page 207.

⁶⁹ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 207.

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inforce General Joseph E. Johnston, who in turn was to relieve General John C. Pemberton, then under siege at Vicksburg.⁷⁰ Helm's brigade spent the entire month of June, 1863 in the vicinity of Jackson, Mississippi, fortifying their position, picketing and following the general routine of camp life.

Day by day General Pemberton's position was growing more serious and on July 1st, the troops of General Johnston were ordered forward to undertake the hazardous venture beyond the Big Black River for an attack upon the Federal land force around Vicksburg. The weather at this time was almost unbearable, the roads were dusty, and drinking water was scarce. Many men died from exhaustion and sunstroke. The fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 necessitated a retreat of Johnston's army, which had not had sufficient time to relieve Pemberton.⁷¹ Federal troops now harassed Johnston's army, and from July 10th, to the 17th, a series of skirmishes between the advance lines occurred at irregular intervals. On the 16th of July Johnston ordered a retreat by a pontoon bridge over Pearl River to Morton.⁷²

Helm's Kentucky Brigade acted as a rear guard

⁷⁰ Horn, Stanley F.: *The Army of Tennessee*, pages 214-215.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pages 219-220.

⁷² Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, pages 208-209.

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for the army, but they were not attacked, as the Federals did not follow. Establishing a camp on the 21st near Morton, afterward called "Camp Hurricane," the weary army settled down for a much needed rest. On July 22nd General Helm wrote to his wife:

As usual we are on a grand retreat, the sufferings of which, so far as I am personally concerned, are unparalleled in the war. We have to drink water that, in ordinary times, you wouldn't offer your horse; and I have hardly slept out of a swamp since we left Jackson. This is the sixth day, and we have not come much over forty miles. Our retreat is very slow and deliberate. The enemy have not annoyed us.⁷³

At Camp Hurricane Helm's Brigade rested for about a month. Their stay there was quiet, with the least duties assigned to them in their entire military careers. This complacency, however, was broken on August 26th when the division of General Breckinridge was ordered to travel by rail and steamer, by the way of Mobile, to Chattanooga (Tyner's Station), to re-enforce Bragg. Helm's Brigade went into camp on September 2nd, and by the eighth day of that month the movements which were the preliminary steps leading to the great battle of Chickamauga were initiated. They marched and countermarched and finally after complicated preliminary military maneuvers the divi-

⁷³ *Ibid.*, page 209.

sion of Breckinridge bivouacked on September 18th, near Chickamauga Creek.⁷⁴

Approaching Chickamauga Creek from Pigeon Mountain Breckinridge's division took their place on the east side of that stream. Their position was near Glass's Mill and they constituted the extreme left of the infantry of the army.⁷⁵ Breckinridge ordered the Second Kentucky across the ford near Glass's Mill in order to determine the strength of the Federal forces, and the Sixth Kentucky was placed in close supporting distance. Other forces were dispatched along the creek, and on the morning of the 19th the remainder of Helm's brigade, along with other regiments, was sent across Glass's Ford. The advance position of Helm's brigade drew fire from the Federals.

While this minor engagement was taking place, General Breckinridge received orders from Lieutenant General D. H. Hill to withdraw his position and to proceed to a point about three miles

⁷⁴ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of the First Kentucky Brigade*, page 209. "It may be observed, however, that in August, Lieutenant-General D. H. Hill had reported for duty in the Army of Tennessee, (Hardee had been transferred to Mississippi) and was placed in command of the corps of which Breckinridge's division formed a part."

Ibid., page 210.

⁷⁵ This position is shown on the "Map of The Battlefield of Chickamauga" of September 18, 1863, prepared under the direction of the Honorable Daniel S. Lamot, Secretary of War, by the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Park Commission, 1901.

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south of Lee and Gordon's Mill. This place was on the road leading from Chattanooga to Lafayette, and was an ideal situation for guarding the approach to that road from Glass's Mill and the ford above. A few casualties resulted from the directed change in the position, but the losses were slight. However, this point was not held for any length of time, as Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk was moving the divisions of his wing as so many men upon a chess board.

The last important movement of Breckinridge's division occurred during the night of September 19th and the morning of the 20th, when he was ordered to lengthen the battle line upon the right of Major Patrick R. Cleburne which placed the Kentuckians on the extreme right of the infantry line of battle, General Helm's brigade constituted the extreme left of Breckinridge's line, General Stovall's was in the center, and General Adams's brigade was on the right.⁷⁶ With orders to advance on the Federals, Cleburne's and Breckinridge's divisions, after some delays, moved forward about 9:30 A.M., and this phase of the battle of Chickamauga opened with great fury and Helm's brigade which had

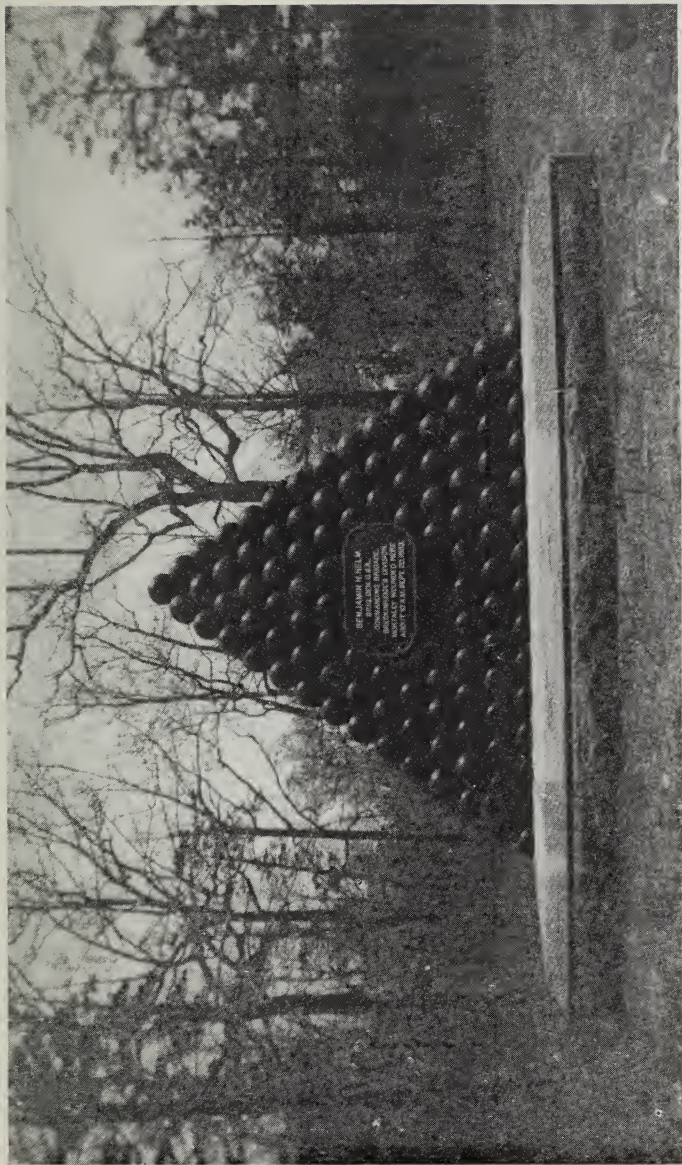
⁷⁶ For a detailed account of the shifting of Hill's corps, Breckinridge's division and Helm's brigade during the battle of Chickamauga read the report of Gen. Breckinridge of October, 1863. *Official Records*. Series I, Vol. XXX, part II, pages 197-201.

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lunged forward with terrific force turned out to be in the center of the fiercest fighting.

About 10:00 A.M. while Breckinridge's division was moving forward against the Federals it was noticed that for some reason a part of the left brigade under Helm had not advanced simultaneously with the rest of the division. Later it was determined that they were facing breastworks situated in angular positions, which subjected Helm's men not only to fire in front but to a fierce enfilading fire from the left. This portion of the line proved to be one of the most hotly contested positions of the entire battlefield.⁷⁷ Here gallant Kentuckians by the hundreds "gave their lives in reckless fashion" as they pushed ahead under the withering cross fire. General Helm, their beloved leader, riding boldly toward the works of the enemy was hit in the right

⁷⁷ The position of these angular breastworks are shown in minute detail on the "Map of The Battlefield of Chickamauga" of September 20, 1863 (morning to 11:00 A. M.) 1901. See reference 75. General Helm's bodyguard and servant was a negro man named Philip. He accompanied him to the war and was with him when he was killed at Chickamauga. After the death of his master he brought through the lines the general's accoutrements consisting of his field glasses, spurs, flask, and pistol, which he delivered to the family in Elizabethtown. In later years the officers and men of the Orphan Brigade, which was General Helm's command, were so appreciative of his devoted service that they presented the aged negro man with a hack and a horse so he could earn a living. It was Philip's good fortune on one occasion to drive Sarah Bernhardt to the theatre. From an article entitled "Don't Look Now" by Emma Loving. *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 19, 1941.



HELM MONUMENT

This triangular-based cannon ball pyramid marks the approximate spot on Chickamauga battlefield where General Helm fell on September 20, 1863.

Photograph courtesy of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

side by a musket ball and fell mortally stricken from his horse.

Immediately after Helm had received his fatal wound Colonel Joseph H. Lewis of the Sixth Kentucky was ordered to command the brigade, but the fire of the Federals drove the Confederates back two hundred yards to the rear and this left a gap in Breckinridge's line, which caused much tactical trouble and a great loss of life during the remainder of the battle.⁷⁸ The rest of the encounter is of course a matter of historical record, and even the dying General Helm at the close of the day heard that the battle of Chickamauga was a victory for the Confederates.⁷⁹

When General Helm fell on the morning of September 20th, 1863, he was carried from the field by his two aides, Lieutenant William Wallace Herr and Lieutenant John B. Pirtle.⁸⁰ Upon an examin-

⁷⁸ *Official Records*. Series I, Vol. XXX, part IV, page 173. Walker, Robert Sparks: "The Pyramids of Chickamauga—Brig.-Gen. Ben H. Helm, of Kentucky, Brother-in-Law of President Abraham Lincoln, Among Gallant Commanding Officers to Die in Defense of Confederate Cause on Battlefield of Chickamauga" Newspaper clipping, date and name of newspaper unknown. Files of Hardin County (Ky.) Historical Society.

⁷⁹ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 385.

⁸⁰ In March, 1863, John B. Pirtle was commissioned by Jefferson Davis second lieutenant for "valor and skill," and was assigned to Co. D, Fourth Kentucky, but was immediately thereafter made additional aide-de-camp and provost marshal for General Helm, and he served in this capacity until the death of that officer. *Ibid.*, Page 506.

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ation of the wound in his right side it was soon determined by the military surgeons of the field hospital that there was no hope for his recovery. He lingered for several hours and during the night of that fatal day he expired. The corpse of the thirty-two-year-old brigadier-general was then conveyed to the home of Colonel W. H. Dabney in Atlanta, where the remains lay until the 23rd. A funeral service for the brave soldier was held in the Episcopal Church, followed by interment in the Atlanta Cemetery with military honors.⁸¹

⁸¹ McMurtry, R. Gerald: *A Series of Monographs Concerning the Lincolns and Hardin County*. Pages 39-40.

Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who in Hardin County*. "Ben Hardin Helm." *The Elizabethtown News*, November 26, 1940.

"The Government authorities have seen fit to erect a monument in his (Helm) memory at Chickamauga Park, on the spot where he fell."

Confederate Veteran, September, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 9, Page 291.

PART II.

A "Rebel" in the White House

III.

IMMEDIATELY after the battle of Chickamauga dispatches were received by Lincoln concerning the engagement and the unconfirmed report of the death of General Helm was a great shock to him. Senator David Davis called on Lincoln on the 22nd of September and he found Lincoln suffering intense grief. "Davis," he said, "I feel as David of old did when he was told of the death of Absalom." Senator Davis understood that Lincoln was grieving over the death of his brother-in-law and he immediately excused himself.⁸² On September 24, 1863, Lincoln sent a telegram to Major-General William S. Rosecrans at Chattanooga stating that he had read the southern account of the battle of Chickamauga in the Richmond papers in which, among other Confederate generals, Helm of Kentucky was listed as killed. Yet at the same time he explained to Rosecrans that a Brigadier-General John (B. H.) Helm was listed as among those wounded. In all likelihood Lincoln held out a faint hope for awhile that General Helm had been wounded and not killed, but such was not the case.⁸³

⁸² *Washington Post* (Date Unknown)

⁸³ Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works* (Two Volume Edition). The Century Company. 1894, Vol. II, pages 412-413.

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On the same day that he wired General Rosecrans, Lincoln sent a telegram to his wife, who was then residing at the Fifth Avenue Hotel while on a visit to New York City. In terse sentences he told her of the battle in which "we are worsted." Among the casualties he informed her rather coldly, because in a telegram he could not well afford to show any sympathy for a rebel general, that "your brother-in-law, Helm" was among those killed in the engagement.⁸⁴

In some sections of the war-torn country news traveled rather slowly and on October 11, 1863, Governor John L. Helm wrote Mrs. Robert S. Todd of Lexington that he had just received the news of the death of his son, who fell at Chickamauga. His letter was rather pathetic:

"Elizabethtown, Ky.
October 11, 1863

Dear Madam:

It is due to you that I announce the death of my son. He fell in the battle south of Chattanooga I have unquestionable information. He was buried in Atlanta. It is probable Emilie was there. Could you through friends or by your own relationship secure for Emilie a passport home If she could be allowed to come to Nashville I would go after her, if a pass would be allowed me. I am totally at a loss to know how to begin. Could you or one of your daughters write to Mrs. Lincoln and through her secure a pass?

In deep sorrow
I am respectfully
John L. Helm."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid., page 413.

⁸⁵ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 219.

Governor Helm was correct in his assumption that Emilie had attended her husband's funeral. Having accompanied her husband South, she was visiting her sister, Mrs. N. H. R. Dawson at Selma, Alabama, at the time of General Helm's death, and she had been notified by General Bragg to come to Atlanta for the funeral services. She arrived just in time to be present at the sad rites.⁸⁶

After the funeral Mrs. Helm planned to return with her two children to her mother's home in Lexington and General Bragg had promised her that he would intercede for her and try to obtain a pass from General Grant, but that Union General was not sympathetic to the proposal. However at the suggestion of Governor Helm, Mrs. Todd acting through the Lexington postmaster Dr. L. Beecher Todd, a cousin of Mrs. Lincoln, asked for permission to go to Georgia and to bring her bereaved daughter and her two grandchildren home. Accordingly Lincoln obliged Mrs. Todd with the following pass which he sent by telegram in the care of the postmaster,:

"War Department, October 15, 1863, L. B. Todd, Lexington:

I send the following pass to your care.

A. Lincoln

Washington, D. C. October 15, 1863

To Whom it May Concern: Allow Mrs. Robert S. Todd, widow, to go South and bring her daughter, Mrs.

⁸⁶ Ibid., page 220.

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General B. Hardin Helm, with her children north to Kentucky.

A. Lincoln"⁸⁷

Knowing that Mrs. Helm would also need a pass as soon as she started her journey homeward, Lincoln about two months later wrote the following order:

Executive Mansion, Washington, December 14, 1863

Whom it may concern: It is my wish that Mrs. Emily T. Helm (widow of the late General B. H. Helm, who fell in the Confederate service), now returning to Kentucky, may have protection of person and property, except as to slaves, of which I say nothing.

A. Lincoln."⁸⁸

Lincoln assumed, although one wonders why, that Mrs. Helm would take an oath of allegiance to the United States. He carefully prepared the following documents for her to subscribe:

"December 14, 1863—Amnesty to Mrs. E. T. Helm.
Executive Mansion, Washington, December 14, 1863

Mrs. Emily T. Helm, not being excepted from the benefits of the proclamation by the President of the United States issued on the eighth day of December, 1863, and having on this day taken and subscribed the oath according to said proclamation, she is fully relieved of all penalties and forfeitures, and remitted to all her rights—all according to said proclamation, and not otherwise; and, in regard to

⁸⁷ Nicolay & Hay: *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Vol. IX, page 169.

⁸⁸ Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works* (Two Volume Edition) Vol. II, page 485.

In writing this pass Lincoln used the word "Confederate," a name he seldom wrote or spoke in referring to the seceded states. Sandburg, Carl: *Abraham Lincoln The War Years*, Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York. Vol. II, page 260.



MRS. BEN HARDIN HELM

Photograph made in 1864

Photograph used with the permission of Mr. Ben Hardin Helm and Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis, Lexington, Kentucky.

MRS. BEN HARDIN HELM

The mother of the First Kentucky (Orphan) Brigade.

Photograph taken from Ed Porter Thompson's book, *The History of the Orphan Brigade.*



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said restored rights of person and property, she is to be protected and afforded facilities as a loyal person.

Abraham Lincoln"⁸⁹

Through correspondence with the Todd family Lincoln had been informed that Mrs. Helm owned some six hundred bales of cotton located in Jackson, Mississippi and Atlanta, Georgia over which she wished to establish a claim of ownership. To take care of this matter Lincoln added the following postscript to the document of amnesty:

"P. S. Mrs. Helm claims to own some cotton at Jackson, Mississippi and also some in Georgia; and I shall be glad, upon either place being brought within our lines, for her to be afforded the proper facilities to show her ownership, and take her property.

A. Lincoln"⁹⁰

The amnesty oath which Lincoln prepared for Mrs. Helm to subscribe was as follows:

"District of Columbia

SS.:

Washington County,

I, Emily T. Helm, do solemnly swear in presence of Almighty God that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decisions of the Supreme Court; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all proclamations of the President, made during the existing rebellion, having reference to

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, page 458.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, page 458.

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slaves so long and so far as not modified or declared void by the Supreme Court. So help me God.”⁹¹

Traveling northward by steamer under a flag of truce Mrs. Helm arrived at Fortress Monroe. At that port a Federal officer came on board and told all the passengers that only those who would take the oath of allegiance to the United States would be allowed to land. In spite of her belief that she might be sent back to Georgia, the scene of her greatest sorrow, she steadfastly refused to take the oath. She was practically without funds and in great distress over the death of her gallant husband, but she remained adamant. She would not take the oath of allegiance, because her friends might feel that she had not been true to the cause for which her husband had given up his life. Her refusal was not that of bravado. The Union officers tried to reason with her, but she consistently refused to yield. She asked for permission to proceed to Washington on parole, pledging her word to return in case she was called upon to take the oath. Perplexed over the president's orders in regard to his sister-in-law the officer in charge telegraphed Lincoln for further instructions. His reply was:

“Send her to me.”⁹²

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, page 458.

⁹² Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 221.

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Realizing that she could not continue her journey to Kentucky, Mrs. Helm proceeded with one of her daughters to Washington, D. C. for a visit with the Lincolns.⁹³ Upon her arrival at the Executive Mansion she was cordially received.⁹⁴ Emilie and Mary both grief-stricken, because Mrs. Lincoln had lost her son Willie, choked up with tears, and tried to find comfort in each other's arms. After the amenities she explained to her brother-in-law her predicament, and she told the president that she did not intend to embarrass him, or make herself conspicuous in any way, provided

⁹³ Emilie Helm took her four-year-old daughter, Katherine, with her to Washington, and Mrs. Robert S. Todd proceeded to Lexington by way of Baltimore with Elodie.

Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to author, June 13, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

Ben Hardin, the youngest child, had not yet been born.

⁹⁴ In the diary of John Hay, under the entry of Dec. 13, 1863 he made the following comment; "I visited Mrs. L. Her sister Mrs. Gen. Helm, is with her, just arrived from Secessia." Dennett, Tyler: *Lincoln and the Civil War In The Diaries and Letters of John Hay*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939, page 139.

Mrs. Helm remained at the White House nearly a week, however the month of her visit in the year 1863 has been confused by several authorities. W. A. Evans in his work *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln*, page 161, gives the month as October, while Katherine Helm in her book *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 222, in quoting from the diary of Mrs. Helm gives the month as November. On the other hand Lincoln in his letter to General Burbridge of August 8, 1864, recorded that "last December Mrs. Emily T. Helm stopped here (Washington, D. C.) on her way from Georgia to Kentucky." The visit was undoubtedly made during the month of December, and this claim is substantiated by the fact that Mrs. Helm's pass, and amnesty papers were dated December 14, 1863.

Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works*, (Two Volume Edition) Vol. II, page 458.

he would allow her to proceed to her home in Kentucky. With such explanations which Lincoln considered reasonable she was accorded every kindness, and while a guest in the White House she occupied the bedroom which had been elaborately decorated for the visit of the Prince of Wales during the Buchanan administration.⁹⁵

Lincoln undoubtedly realized that Emilie's presence in the capital would start gossip-monger's tongues wagging about the rebel in the Executive Mansion.⁹⁶ Orville H. Browning recorded in his

⁹⁵ Emilie Helm described these quarters as follows: "The room I occupy had been fitted up for the visit of the Prince of Wales. The purple hangings seem gloomy and funeral although brightened with yellow cords."

Lincoln Lore: Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Edited by Dr. Louis A. Warren.

"The White House — 1861 to 1865." No. 335. September 9, 1935.

⁹⁶ During the latter months of 1862 and the early months of 1863 an abortive attempt was made by the reactionaries of both parties to get Lincoln out of office on the charge that he lacked ability and energy, that he was not pushing the war with sufficient vigor, and that Mrs. Lincoln was a Southern spy. In fact Mrs. Lincoln was openly accused of being a disloyalist because of her family's connection with the Confederate army. The Senate members of the committee on the conduct of the war held some closed sessions concerning Mrs. Lincoln, but these accusations ceased after Lincoln was secretly notified of the charges. He made an unexpected appearance before the committee and formally denied the accusations, with the result that all consideration of the rumors were forgotten.

Sandburg, Carl: *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Vol. II, pages 198-200.

After reading the above annotation while this work was still in manuscript form, Dr. F. Lauriston Bullard, Chief editorial writer of the *Boston Herald*, President of the Lincoln Group of Boston, and an eminent Lincoln authority took exception to Sandburg's statement as it appeared in his work *Abraham Lincoln: The War*

diary that he called on the president on Monday, December 14, 1863, and that Lincoln told him "his sister-in-law, Mrs. Helm was in the house, but he did not wish it known."⁹⁷ Evidently Lincoln was worried about the distressing financial conditions of his sister-in-law, because he told Browning that "she wished an order for the protection of some cotton she had at Jackson, Mississippi. He thought she ought to have it, but he was afraid he would be censured if he did so."⁹⁸

If Lincoln hoped to keep Mrs. Helm's presence at the Executive Mansion a secret he was doomed to disappointment, because this ardent Southerner could not keep her tongue when the Confederacy was assailed. After all, her husband had given his life for the South, and the least she could do would be to defend those institutions which he had cherished. As a wife of a Confederate general Mrs. Helm was to be the butt of many vindic-

Years, Ibid. He wrote an abbreviated note on Jan. 1, 1943 as follows: "Allow one suggestion. I doubt that A. L. ever made that appearance before the Com. on Conduct of War, re. spy in the White House, as recorded by Sandburg. His only authority is a newspaper article 40 years after the event. Thos. L. James was Post-M. Gen'l. under Garfield, 1881-2, says a member of the Com. on Con. of War told him while he held that office. Printed the story in N. Y. Times 1909. Did not mention it at all in 1895 in the N. Y. Independent or in his article in the Wm. Hayes Ward book, I think the evidence is not conclusive."

⁹⁷ Browning, Orville H.: *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*. Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois, 1925. Vol. I, page 651.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, page 657.

tive remarks from Northerners who did not relish her presence in Washington.

One day Senator Ira Harris and General Daniel E. Sickles paid the Lincolns a call and upon greeting Mrs. Helm the General said that he had told the Senator that she was in Washington and that perhaps she could give him some news concerning his old colleague, John C. Breckinridge. Mrs. Helm replied that she had not seen General Breckinridge for quite some time and that she could give him no news concerning his friend. To all of Senator Harris's questions she gave him non-committal answers. Evidently this angered Harris, who remarked that the Union soldiers had whipped the rebels at Chattanooga and that he had heard that "the scoundrels ran like scared rabbits." This was more than Mrs. Helm could tolerate and she remarked that the Confederates had followed the example that the Federals had "set them at Bull Run and Manassas."

General Sickles could not forget this affront and he struggled on his crutches, because he had only one leg, to the president's room to tell Lincoln about his sister-in-law. Upon hearing of the details of the conversation Lincoln said, "The child has a tongue like the rest of the Todds." This remark appeared to have further agitated the General and in an excited and domineering voice he told

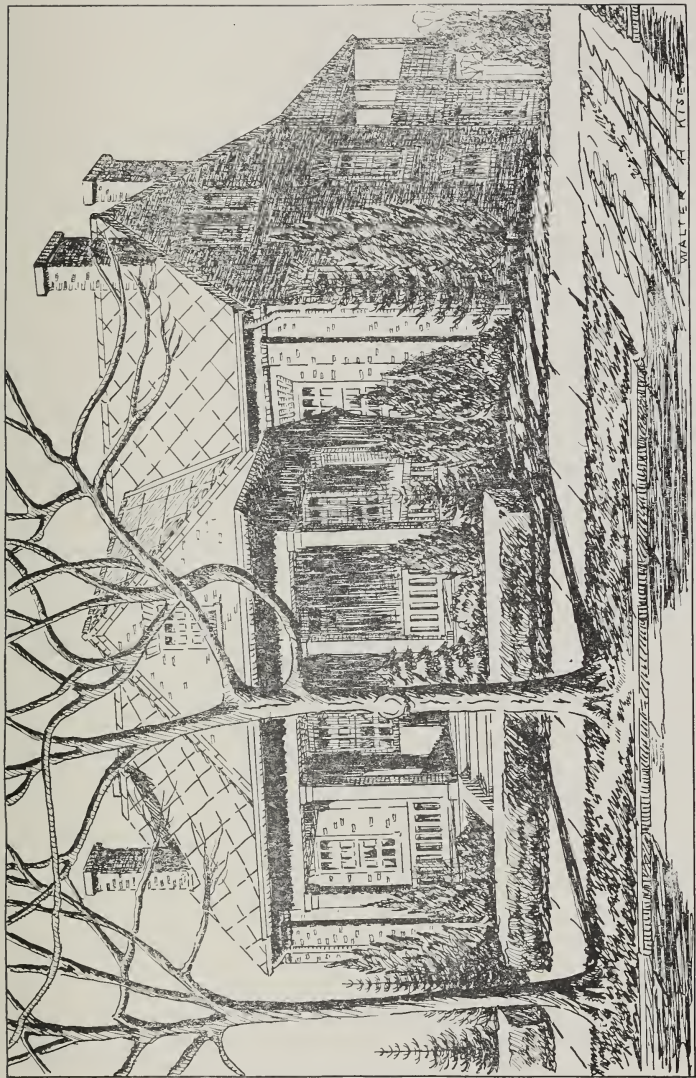
Lincoln, "You should not have that rebel in your house." This dictatorial manner on the part of Sickles angered Lincoln and he informed the general that he was usually in the habit of choosing his own guests, and that Mrs. Helm was in his house because she had been ordered there.⁹⁹

To prevent any further embarrassing situations, no one in the Lincoln household mentioned the war or politics, and after nearly a week's visit Mrs. Helm planned to resume her trip to Kentucky. To spare his sister-in-law further pain Lincoln did not mention the oath of allegiance, and before her departure he earnestly expressed to her his sorrow over the death of her husband. In order that she might not be molested on her journey homeward Lincoln gave her a letter "to protect her against the mere fact of being General Helm's widow."¹⁰⁰ In providing Emilie with this safeguard to protect her person and property (except as to slaves) Lincoln said, "Little sister I never knew you to do a mean thing in your life. I know you will not embarrass me in any way on your return to Kentucky."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Pages 228-231.

¹⁰⁰ Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works*. (Two Volume Edition) Vol. II, page 559.

¹⁰¹ Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*. Page 232.



THE HOME OF MRS. BEN HARDIN HELM

Elizabethtown, Kentucky

Mrs. Helm resided here during the years she served as the Elizabethtown postmistress. Drawing used with the permission of Walter H. Kiser and *The Louisville Courier-Journal and Times*, Louisville, Kentucky.

Proud and Unbowed

IV.

EMILIE TRAVELED to Kentucky fully aware that she should say nothing against the Lincoln administration because of the president's kindness to her. However, Lexington and Elizabethtown were not the peaceful, serene communities that she had known before the war. In Lexington she found conditions exceedingly trying because of the tyrannical rule of General Stephen G. Burbridge who was enforcing martial law upon the citizens of the Blue Grass Country.¹⁰² In fact, the blustering threats of Burbridge kept Mrs. Helm in a constant state of fear and she was afraid to leave the house.¹⁰³ Nevertheless her presence in Lexington did not go unnoticed by the Union authorities, and within less than a year after her return home a malicious rumor of treasonable acts against the government was trumped up against her. Upon hearing the charges the president wrote General Burbridge the following letter:

¹⁰² Townsend, William H.: *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*. Pages 343-344.

Coleman, Jr., J. Winston: *Lexington During the Civil War*. Commercial Printing Co. 1938. Pages 46-49.

¹⁰³ Letter of Ben H. Helm, Helm Place, Route 1, Lexington, Ky., September 24, 1942, to author. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

BEN HARDIN HELM

"Washington, August 8, 1864

Major-General Burbridge, Lexington, Ky.:

Last December Mrs. Emily T. Helm, half sister of Mrs. L., and widow of the rebel General Ben Hardin Helm, stopped here on her way from Georgia to Kentucky, and I gave her a paper, as I remember, to protect her against the mere fact of her being General Helm's widow. I hear a rumor today that you recently sought to arrest her, but was prevented by her presenting the paper from me. I do not intend to protect her against the consequences of disloyal words or acts, spoken or done by her since her return to Kentucky, and if the papers given her by me can be construed to give her protection for such words or acts, it is hereby revoked *pro tanto*. Deal with her for current conduct just as you would with any other. A. Lincoln ¹⁰⁴

In the light of this letter it would appear that Mrs. Helm had actually violated a confidence, that once she was safely home in Kentucky she had forgotten Lincoln's request and her promise not to embarrass him or the administration. Yet there are certain indications which will lead one to believe that the rumors about her disloyal acts and

¹⁰⁴ Nicolay & Hay: *Abraham Lincoln Complete Works*. (Two Volume Edition) Vol. II, page 559.

Official Records: Series II, Vol. VII, pages 567.

The publication of this letter in the *Century* magazine, December, 1895, Vol. LI, No. 2, pages 251-256 as a part of the article "Appeals To Lincoln's Clemency" by Leslie J. Perry was a surprise to Mrs. Helm who up to that time did not know of its existence. In the *Century* magazine, June, 1896, vol. LII, No. 2, page 318, Mrs. Helm in the "Open Letters" under the title "President Lincoln and the Widow of General Helm" defended her position and gave a convincing explanation why she thought Lincoln wrote the letter.

"Mr. Lincoln and Ben Hardin Helm," (author unknown) *Confederate Veteran*, March, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 3, pages 72-73.

words were not true.¹⁰⁵ While she sympathized with the war-torn South she was careful that no deed or statement of hers could be so construed as to make Lincoln regret his consideration of her. In Kentucky Mrs. Helm was accorded every kindness and sympathy by her friends irrespective of conflicting opinions, and it is not likely that she made many enemies because of her sincere loyalty to the South. Of course her position in Lexington society naturally kept her in the eyes of the public and some Federal officers might have been resentful of her Southern learnings, which apparently had official sanction.

Only once did Emilie Helm have occasion to use Lincoln's protection paper and that was when she asked a Federal officer to keep his troops, who

¹⁰⁵ As a visitor in the Executive Mansion Mrs. Helm did not create a public scandal; yet in the spring of 1864 her own sister Martha (Mrs. Clement White of Alabama) did cause Lincoln some embarrassment. In Washington it is said she "talked secesh" and it was believed by some that she had carried merchandise (quinine) into the South for the aid of the Confederacy. Mrs. White often called on the Lincolns, but according to some authorities they declined to see her. Lincoln did issue a pass for her but she was not allowed to take her trunks through the lines unexamined. On one occasion she was greatly humiliated to have an officer discover in her baggage a Confederate officer's uniform and a fine sword, which she, nevertheless, carried to the South and presented to General Lee.

Leech, Margaret: *Reveille in Washington, 1861-1865*, pages 307-308.

For a favorable explanation of Mrs. White's conduct see the work of Katherine Helm, *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, pages 180-183.

Welles, Gideon: *Diary of Gideon Welles*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911, Vol. II, page 21.

had camped near her home, from trespassing and to cease taking her family's food as it was being cooked in their kitchen. The officer, in all likelihood, taken aback by the presidential order, complied with the request in a good-natured way. How General Burbridge learned of Mrs. Helm's immunity by presidential sanction is not clear. It is to be supposed the Federal officer reported Mrs. Helm's use of the protection paper to General Burbridge, his superior in command, and the latter desiring to clear up the matter in case Mrs. Helm should make herself obnoxious, undoubtedly had the matter referred to President Lincoln, who appears to have been apprised of the circumstances through the unreliable channel of a rumor. The fact remains, however, that Mrs. Helm was not arrested and never had any trouble with the United States authorities because she "could never have been so lost to (her) sense of obligation to President Lincoln."¹⁰⁶

In spite of Mrs. Helm's commendable personal conduct the activities of her sister Miss Katherine ("Kitty") Todd and her mother Mrs. Robert S. Todd in behalf of the cause of the South may have placed the young widow in an extremely un-

¹⁰⁶ Helm, Emilie Todd: "President Lincoln and the Widow of General Helm." *Century magazine*, June, 1896, Vol. LII, No. 2, page 318.

favorable light. Miss Todd and her mother were unusually active in the fall of 1864 when they attempted to prevent the infliction of the death penalty upon Captain McGee and Walter Ferguson, two Confederate soldiers who had ridden with the troops of General John Hunt Morgan. The Todds tried desperately to have the order of General Burbridge rescinded and they even went so far as to petition Lincoln to commute the sentence, but their efforts were in vain. It is believed that the President would have yielded to their pleas, but the petition of mercy was intercepted and Lincoln did not receive their request for commutation.¹⁰⁷ Consequently the two men were taken out of prison on November 15th, and were hanged near the fair-grounds in Lexington.¹⁰⁸

It was the policy of Lincoln to commute most of the death sentences of Burbridge, who considered criticism of the administration as treason; however, the constant, if not righteous agitation of the Todds against the general's authority in Lexington must have caused Lincoln considerable embarrassment. Lincoln would have been especially chagrined in the summer and fall of 1864 to have had political capital made of the safeguard he gave

¹⁰⁷ Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 316.

¹⁰⁸ Collins': *History of Kentucky*, Vol. I, page 148.

Mrs. Helm.¹⁰⁹ His letter to Burbridge nipped in the bud any criticism that might have arisen over the protection Mrs. Helm enjoyed, and yet at the same time Lincoln's orders did not place her position in jeopardy. She was an aristocratic lady whose position, whether the authorities liked it or not, placed her beyond the ordinary clutches of military authority. Lincoln would have not allowed Burbridge to deal with his sister-in-law, or any other member of the Todd family "just as you would with any other," in spite of the fact that such words were recorded over his signature.¹¹⁰

A further proof that Mrs. Helm did not violate the confidence of Lincoln is indicated by his interest in attempting to help her get possession of her six hundred bales of cotton. In January, 1865, Lincoln granted passes to General James W. Singleton and Judge James Hughes to go South to buy cotton and tobacco and at this time he gave the men a brief history of his sister-in-law and told them of her ownership of a considerable number of bales of

¹⁰⁹ If newspaper publicity had been given to the pass held by Mrs. Helm, after the scandal connected with the permit held by Mrs. White, Lincoln's political prospects for reelection might have been seriously hampered.

¹¹⁰ According to the diary of Gideon Welles (April 29, 1864) Lincoln told Brutus Clay "that if Mrs. W. (White) did not leave forthwith she might expect to find herself within twenty-four hours in the Old Capital Prison." Nevertheless, imprisonment in a Federal jail in Washington was not to be compared to incarceration under General Burbridge in Lexington, as that officer meted out cruel and harsh sentences with impunity.

cotton which she had in the South. Lincoln requested Singleton and Hughes, if possible, to make some arrangement with Mrs. Helm about the sale of this commodity.¹¹¹

During the latter part of March, 1865, Emilie Helm, along with a companion, Mrs. Bernard Pratt, a relative of President Zachary Taylor and General Singleton, obtained passes to go to Richmond, Virginia, to see about the cotton, but she selected an inopportune time for a business trip, because the fall of Richmond was at last about to become an accomplished fact. Mrs. Helm was advised to leave immediately, which she did on the next flag of truce boat. By orders of General E. O. C. Ord, Captain Robert Lincoln, her nephew, was instructed to accompany Mrs. Helm and her friend from Fortress Monroe to a point near Petersburg.¹¹² She arrived in Washington on March 25th and registered at the Metropolitan Hotel. By this time Lincoln had secured from General Grant an order for the protection of the cotton, the great bulk of which was in storage in Atlanta, Georgia. The cotton had survived the scorched-earth policy of the Confederacy and the invading Yankee armies of the North, but before she could sell it or have it

¹¹¹ Browning, Orville H.: *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*. Vol. II, page 2.

¹¹² Helm, Katherine: *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, page 250.

insured an accidental fire destroyed it.¹¹³ While in Washington and Baltimore on this business trip Emilie did not call on her sister and brother-in-law, because they were at that time visiting with General Grant at City Point, Virginia.¹¹⁴

As her residence in Kentucky had been intolerable Emilie bought a home in Madison, Indiana which was north of the Ohio River, where she could remain free of the turmoil of military rule.¹¹⁵ There she became the organist in Christ Church, where as an accomplished musician she earned a livelihood.¹¹⁶ The remainder of her long life was spent in devotion to her gallant husband's memory, and her cruel fate was softened somewhat by her interest in her three children, Katherine, Elodie and Ben Hardin.¹¹⁷ As a widow in her early twen-

¹¹³ Browning, Orville H.: *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*. Vol. II, page 15.

Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to author, June 13, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

¹¹⁴ Sandburg, Carl: *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years*, Vol. IV, pages 140-172.

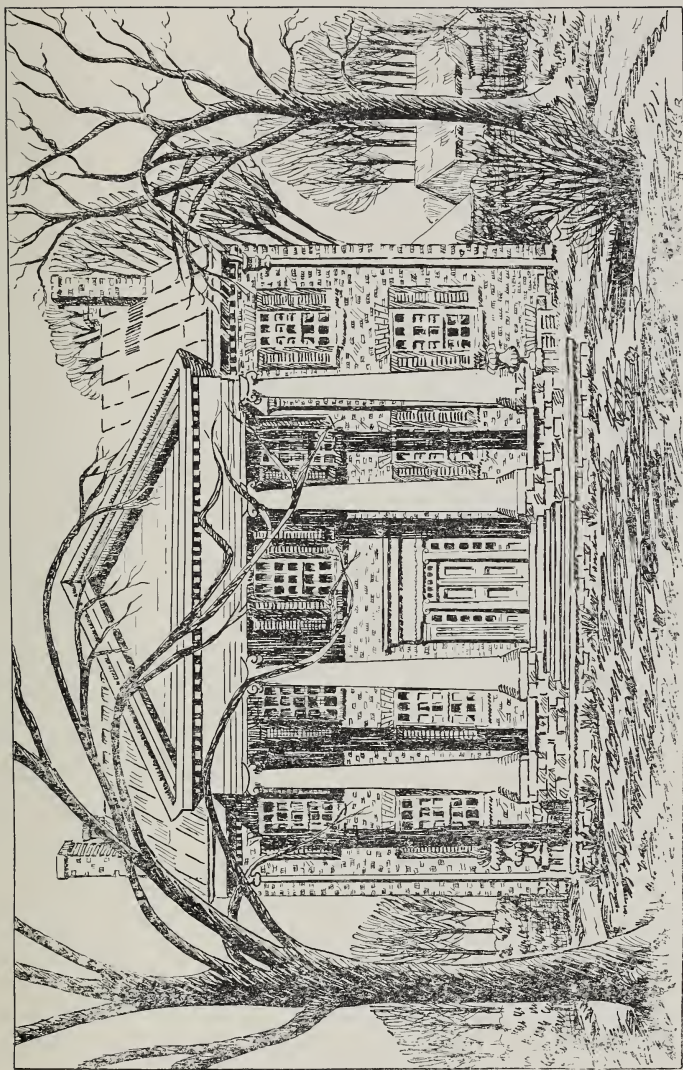
¹¹⁵ "My grandmother (Mrs. Robert S. Todd) came and lived with her; after my grandmother's death, we moved back to Louisville, Ky."

Letter of Ben H. Helm to author. Sept. 24, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

¹¹⁶ She was a graduate of the Conservatory of Music at Cincinnati, Ohio.

Letter of Elodie Helm Lewis to Mrs. L. B. Hoke, June 29, 1940. "Mrs. Helm was educated by Miss Harriet Stanwood, who was afterward the wife of James G. Blaine, and by that eminent Presbyterian, Rev. Stuart Robinson, of Louisville."

Anderson, Charles W.: "After the Fall of Fort Donelson," *Confederate Veteran*, September, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 9, pages 289-291.



THE HELM PLACE

Mr. Ben Hardin Helm and Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis, son and daughter of General Helm now reside at this place near Lexington, Kentucky.

Drawing used with the permission of Walter H. Kiser and *The Louisville Courier-Journal and Times*, Louisville, Kentucky.

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ties she had as her main purpose in life the education of her children, and this expense necessitated the acceptance of some suitable position.¹¹⁸

After residing in Madison for ten or twelve years she moved to Louisville and for about two years taught a class in music. This gave her an opportunity to visit on many occasions the ancestral estate of the Kentucky Helms, located near the northern city limits of Elizabethtown.¹¹⁹ Upon the renewal of her acquaintances in the little village where she and her husband had known so much happiness she decided to return to Elizabethtown where she was appointed postmistress by President Chester A. Arthur, an office which she retained for about twelve years.¹²⁰ In Elizabethtown she purchased a dignified

¹¹⁷Mrs. Helm's three children were Katherine (died June 19, 1937), Elodie (Mrs. Waller Lewis) and Ben Hardin. The latter two now occupy the family home near Lexington, Ky. Katherine Helm painted several portraits of her aunt, Mrs. Lincoln, one of which now hangs in the White House and another in the Lincoln Room of Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee. Her book, *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, has enjoyed a wide sale both in the United States and England.
The Louisville Times, June 19, 1937.

¹¹⁸Hardin County Historical Society: *Who Was Who In Hardin County*. "Emilie Todd Helm." *The Hardin County Enterprise*, July 16, 1940.

¹¹⁹The John L. Helm mansion consists of sixteen rooms, exclusive of halls, butlers pantry, and dressing rooms. It was constructed in 1830 or 1831 of brick, which were made on the site. The land was granted to the Helm family in 1780 by the State of Virginia. "In 1893 Mrs. Helm contributed to the *Illustrated Kentuckian* an interesting article on the old home, its history and its surroundings."

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 319.
Emilie Todd Helm made several excellent literary contributions to

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gray brick home on Poplar Street which had been built about the year 1820.

Moving again to Louisville after giving up her position in the Elizabethtown postoffice, she made her residence in that city for a short period.¹²¹ Ben Hardin had always promised his mother to buy a Blue Grass farm as soon as he could make the money, and in 1912 he purchased the colonial home of Colonel Abraham Bowman, situated near Lexington on the Bowman's Mill Road. This farm was formerly the property of General Levi Todd on which their pioneer ancestor had erected Todds Fort in 1778. There, in an atmosphere of the past, surrounded by the trappings of her soldier-husband, and deeply imbued with the Lincoln tradition, she died February 20, 1930, at the remarkable age of ninety-three years.¹²²

the study of the Lincolns. One of her best articles "Mary Todd Lincoln, Reminiscences and Letters of The Wife of President Lincoln" was published in *McClures* magazine in September, 1898.

¹²⁰ The records of the Post Office Department indicate that Mrs. Helm was appointed postmistress at Elizabethtown on March 1, 1883. She served until her successor was appointed April 8, 1895. *The Postal Laws and Regulations* of 1879, page 57, section 108, provided that no person can be appointed postmaster who cannot legally execute a bond and take the prescribed oath of office. Letter of Ambrose O'Connell, First Assistant Postmaster General, to author, June 5, 1942. Files of Department of Lincolniana.

¹²¹ Hardin County Historical Society. Who Was Who In Hardin County. "Emilie Todd Helm." *The Hardin County Enterprise*, July 16, 1940.

¹²² An excellent description of the Helm mansion at Lexington, Kentucky, is found in an article entitled "Helm Place Breathes Spirit of The Old South—Beautiful Memories of Emilie Todd

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The most significant event in her life, after the war had ended and peace again hovered over the Southland, was the occasion of the reunion of the First Kentucky (Orphan) Brigade of Infantry at Elizabethtown on September 19, 1884.¹²³ It was at this solemn and impressive gathering of Confederate veterans that the remains of General Ben Hardin Helm were re-interred in the burial ground of his fathers, in a private cemetery on the ancestral

Helm Linger About Colonial Manor" by Elizabeth M. Simpson. *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 24, 1932.

Mrs. Helm was buried in the Todd family lot in Lexington, Kentucky.

Evans, W. A.: *Mrs. Abraham Lincoln*. Page 48.

¹²³ The First Kentucky Brigade is now usually called the "Orphan Brigade" and the reason for this name has best been explained by the regimental historian, Ed Porter Thompson; namely, that "its attitude toward its native state—expatriated by reason of identification with a cause which Kentucky had not formally approved; its complete isolation from its people; its having been time and again deprived of its commander by transfer to other service, or death in battle—these, all and singular may have suggested the name, which soon fixed itself in the popular mind, and has come to be the real one by which it will be known in history."

Thompson, Ed Porter: *History of The Orphan Brigade*, page 29.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, page 873.

The stone slab over the grave of General Helm bears the following inscription:

Ben Hardin Helm
of Kentucky
Fell at Chickamauga
Sept. 20th, 1863
Aged 32 years
He giveth his beloved
sleep.

On September 7, 1942, the Hardin County Historical Society (Elizabethtown, Ky.) marked with appropriate signs the grave of General Helm calling attention to his deeds of valor in a cause which he believed was worthy of his support, so much so, in fact, that he was willing to sacrifice his life for those principles.

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acres of his pioneer forebears.¹²⁴ Here in the shadow of a great granite shaft erected by the State of Kentucky in honor of Governor John L. Helm, the Confederate general's remains were placed among his kindred.

"Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless song shall tell,
When many a vanished age hath flown,
The story how ye fell;
Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight,
Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of Glory's light
That gilds your deathless tomb."

—THEODORE O'HARA,
The Bivouac of the Dead



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225 copies of this book, each signed
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Table and their friends.

R. Gerald McMurtry



